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Concert: Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra

Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra

Jeffery Meyer

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Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra

Ford Hall

Sunday, October 10, 2010

4:00 PM

Jeffery Meyer, conductor

Steven Mackey, guest composer
and electric guitar soloist

PROGRAM

The Barber of Seville (Il barbiere di Siviglia): Overture

Gioachino Rossini
(1792-1868)

Tuck and Roll (2000)

Steven Mackey, electric guitar

Steven Mackey
(b. 1956)

- I. Anthem
- II. Dark Caprice
- III. Intrigue
- IV. Puffe

Intermission

Symphony No.1 in C minor, Op. 68

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

- I. Un poco sostenuto; Allegro
- II. Andante sostenuto
- III. Un poco alletgretto e grazioso
- IV. Adagio – Piu Andante – Allegro non troppo ma con brio – Piu Allegro

PROGRAM NOTES

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868): The Barber of Seville (Il barbiere di Siviglia): Overture

Few composers enjoyed as much success during their lifetimes as Gioachino Rossini. Although Rossini was a composer of a wide variety of musical genres and forms, it was his operas that brought him the greatest success. His most beloved opera, *The Barber of Seville*, was first produced on February 20, 1816, at the *Teatro Argentina* in Rome. The opera is based on the Beaumarchais trilogy *Le Barbier de Seville*, and the libretto was written by Cesare Sterbini. The opera focuses on two men, Doctor Bartolo and the Count of Almaviva, quarreling for the love of the beautiful Rosina. Figaro, a local barber, disguised as Lindoro, a drunken soldier, helps the Count to win her heart. The Overture for *The Barber of Seville* has since become a standard concert piece.

Rossini's operas often display a sense of sarcastic humor that seems to be a reflection of Rossini's personal qualities. He wrote:

I wrote the overture of the *Gazza Ladra* the day before the opening night under the roof of the Scala Theatre, where I had been imprisoned by the director and secured by four stagehands. For the *Barbiere*, I did better: I did not even compose an overture, I just took one already destined for an opera called *Elisabetta*. Public was very pleased.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897): Symphony No.1 in C minor, Op. 68

Robert Schumann was already a well-known composer and pianist when he first met Johannes Brahms in 1853. After listening to Brahms playing his own compositions on the piano, Schumann called them "veiled symphonies." Although Brahms' piano music displayed a grasp of symphonic constructive principles, thought Schumann, it took another 23 years for Brahms to "unveil" his first symphony.

The *Symphony Op. 68* was first performed in November 1876 when Brahms was 43 years old. By this time he had completed other orchestral works including the *Serenades Op. 11* and *16*, the *Variations on a Theme of Joseph Haydn Op. 56a*, *A German Requiem Op. 45* and the *Piano Concerto in D minor Op. 15*, which Brahms had originally conceived as a symphony. The delay in writing a symphony may be attributed to two main reasons. One was the high expectation from Brahms' friends and the public that he would continue the German tradition of monumental symphonies after the death of Beethoven. The second reason was Brahms' own sense of perfectionism and deep awareness of his potential future role in the history of Western classical music. He often rewrote and revised works tirelessly and even destroyed many drafts of his music. Brahms' path toward his Op. 68 was a long developmental process in fully exploring the symphony orchestra. This is evident in a letter he wrote to his close friend Joachim in 1854 while he was orchestrating the first movement of *Piano Concerto op. 15*. He stated, "I understand even less about instrumentation than appears from the score: the best parts of it are due to Grimm. [Grimm, a common friend of Brahms and Joachim.]"

As the result of this arduous journey, Brahms' first symphony displays his full talents as a mature composer. The listener can identify in it many of Brahms' signatures: the rhythm conflict

between meter and pulse, the displacement of downbeats, a rich elaboration of harmony, a special attention to treatment of formal structure and thematic processes. In considering all of Brahms' symphonies we cannot say, as we can with many other composers (Beethoven included), that they evolve in complexity. The first has as great an impact and mastery as the following three masterworks of symphonic form.

The symphony begins with a dramatic and broad introduction followed by a strident *Allegro* in C minor. The second movement *Andante sostenuto* has an atmosphere of simplicity and great beauty. The third movement, *Un poco allegretto e grazioso*, begins with two five bar phrases in the clarinets that call to mind a simple folk dance. This dancing mood becomes more *agitato* in the middle section but calms again by the end of the movement. The tempestuous *Adagio* of last the movement recalls the intensely dramatic character of the beginning of the symphony that leads the listener into a glorious *Allegro* in C major.

Steven Mackey (b.1956): Tuck and Roll (2000)

There is a musicians' joke that goes, 'How do you get an electric guitar player to shut up?' Answer: 'Put music in front of him.' Generally speaking, guitarists don't read music in the same sense that, say, cellists do. Cellists are trained to read music the way an actor reads a play, even at sight endowing it with character, history, and many levels of psychology; they interpret. Guitarists read music like drivers in a foreign city reading road-signs; they decode. After all, the guitar evolved from an aural and improvised tradition. With that in mind, I left the guitar part open for improvisation in my first electric guitar concerto, *Deal*, written for jazz great Bill Frisell.

When Michael Tilson Thomas and the New World Symphony asked me to compose a piece in which I would be the guitar soloist, I was excited about the possibility of composing a piece for which I was the best qualified soloist. It's not that I'm a blazing, state-of-the-art virtuoso, I'm not (although I was hot when I was 18). But, over the past decade I've developed an approach to the guitar that draws on my checkered past as a rock guitar player, my training in classical guitar and lute, and my experience performing my own, fully-notated works for the electric guitar in 'legit' chamber music contexts (including three pieces for electric guitar and string quartet).

Where *Deal* is driven by the culture gap between the improvising guitarist and the interpreting orchestral musicians, *Tuck and Roll* explores various ways of playing together: unison playing, call and response, and intricate interplay between the guitar and sub-groups of the orchestra. While I might assert that the culture/training gap between me and the orchestra is small, there is no denying that the electric guitar brings a distinct new sound and attitude to the orchestral palette. This fact is a primary source of inspiration for the character, lines, and textures of *Tuck and Roll*.

Tuck and Roll is in four movements. In broad terms, the first and last are exuberant and celebratory; the inner movements are moody. Since the music is restless, somewhat of a road trip, really, I offer a brief description of the lay of the land to help the listener track the journey.

The first movement works with two main ideas. The first is an anthem/fanfare melody which is always accompanied by a complex, almost chaotic-sounding rhythm in the percussion. This takes about a minute-and-a-half to achieve its full flavor, after which the guitar makes a solo entry using the bumpy percussion rhythm. After a brief return to the anthem the guitar has another solo

statement, this time a down-and-dirty riff, Eric Clapton meets Leoš Janáček. The rest of the movement develops that idea extensively.

Dark Caprice has a more mercurial continuity and a more quirky topography. After a brief introduction, there is a sequence of short sections with descriptive performance indications: 'a plodding, nasty, mutant groove,' 'psychedelic carousel,' 'akimbo,' 'bright and jubilant.' It wanders versions of the anthem and the down-and-dirty riff from the first movement. It begins 'breezy' and culminates in a wacky passage for bottleneck slide guitar (a technique from old time Mississippi delta blues). When the din subsides, the music begins to pull itself out of this disoriented funk and eventually succeeds with an athletic guitar solo accompanied by brass and bells. The movement ends with a coda: a fuzzy, nostalgic recollection of the anthem.

Intrigue is less willful and capricious and more lyrical and sensuous than the second movement. I think of it in two halves. The first is a slowly evolving kaleidoscopic image, kind of spacey and eerie. The second half is more clearly melodic with a stylized film noir passion.

Puffe refers to a 16th-century instrumental dance that is related, I believe, to the Allemande. As a lutenist, my showstopper was My Lady Hundsdon's Puffe by John Dowland. Something about the way this movement feels to play and its ebullience, reminds me of the Dowland piece, although my main theme is a double-time version of the anthem in 7/16 time, hardly an Allemande. The guitar proposes the snappy version of the anthem but is swallowed by wistfully nostalgic chords in the strings. Then the hyper-anthem takes root as the basis for a set of variations which eventually careen to a halt just short of a guitar cadenza, an oasis of sensitivity before it thrusts, parries and charges to the end.

Tuck and Roll was named after a type of leather upholstery used in American muscle cars made well before the oil crunch of 1973. The overstuffed black leather, tucked and stitched to form rolls is associated with cruisers, hoods and, in my mind, endless nights bathed in the green glow of dash lights, pursuing perilous freedom and unabashed hedonism as an antidote to existential nausea. I am drawn to the dark, yet playful spirit it symbolizes and I like the sound of the words: the first word hits hard and stops on a dime and the second goes on forever. The vague suggestion of gymnastic maneuvers is welcomed, although, along those lines, there is a whiff of desperation: 'tuck and roll' was my gymnast/brother's advice as he tried to coax me to jump down from a tree. I broke my arm.

--Steven Mackey, 2000

Notes by Marcos Santos

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Chicago, **Jeffery Meyer** (DMA, MM, SUNY Stony Brook; BM, Lawrence Conservatory) began his musical studies as a pianist, and shortly thereafter continued on to study composition and conducting. He is the Director of Orchestras at the Ithaca College School of Music, as well as the founder and Artistic Director of the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic in St. Petersburg, Russia. In recent concert seasons, he has been seen conducting, performing as piano soloist and chamber musician, as well as conducting from the keyboard in the United States, Canada, Russia, and throughout Europe and Asia. He has appeared with ensembles such as the Milwaukee Symphony, Syracuse Symphony, Philippine Philharmonic, Cayuga Chamber Orchestra and the Orchestra Sinfonico “Haydn” di Bolzano e Trento.

Called “one of the most interesting and creatively productive conductors working in St. Petersburg” by Sergei Slonimsky, he is an active participant in the music of our time, has collaborated with dozens of composers, and commissioned and premiered numerous new works. In 2007, he made his Glinka Hall conducting debut in the final concert of the 43rd St. Petersburg “Musical Spring” International Festival, featuring works by three of St. Petersburg’s most prominent composers, and in 2009, he conducted the opening concert of the 14th International Musical Olympus Festival at the Hermitage Theatre. He has also been featured numerous times as both a conductor and pianist as part of the “Sound Ways” International New Music Festival in St. Petersburg, Russia. Most recently, he led the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic in its United States debut with three performances at Symphony Space’s 2010 “Wall-to-Wall, Behind the Wall” Festival in New York City which the New York Times called “impressive”, “powerful”, “splendid”, and “blazing.”

As a pianist, he performs frequently as part of the piano-percussion duo *Strike*. He has been broadcast on CBC Newfoundland, has recorded and performed with the Philadelphia Virtuosi (Naxos), and has been heard as a soloist at the Aspen Festival. During the 2001-2002 academic year he lived and studied in Berlin and Leipzig as the recipient of a DAAD grant in music. He has been distinguished in several international competitions (2008 Cadaqués Conducting Competition, 2003 Vakhtang Jordania International Conducting Competition, 2003 Beethoven Sonata International Piano Competition) and was a prizewinner in the 2008 Tenth International “Antonio Pedrotti” Conducting Competition.

Steven Mackey, Karel Husa Visiting Professor of Composition, was born in 1956 to American parents stationed in Frankfurt, Germany. His first musical passion was playing the electric guitar in rock bands based in northern California. He later discovered concert music and has composed for orchestras, chamber ensembles, dance and opera. He regularly performs his own works, including two electric guitar concertos as well as numerous solo and chamber works, and is also active as an improvising musician.

As a composer, Mackey has been honored by numerous awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, two awards from the Kennedy Center for the performing arts, the Stoeger Prize for Chamber Music by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and in 2000 the Miami performing arts center acknowledged his contributions to orchestral music with a special career achievement award. His *Indigenous Instruments* was selected to represent the U.S. at the International Rostrum of Composers in Paris in 1990. Mackey has been the composer in

residence at numerous music festivals including the Tanglewood and Aspen music festivals, and he was featured at the 2000 American Mavericks Festival and the 2003 Holland festival in Amsterdam.

Among his commissions are works for the Chicago and San Francisco Symphonies, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Kronos Quartet, the Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, the Fromm Foundation, the Brentano String Quartet, the Borromeo String Quartet, Fred Sherry, Dawn Upshaw, and The Dutch Radio Symphony, Prism Saxophone Quartet, the BBC Scottish Chamber Orchestra and many others.

His monodrama - *Ravenshead* - for Tenor/actor (Rinde Eckert) and electro-acoustic band/ensemble (The Paul Drescher Ensemble), has been performed nearly one hundred times and is available on a min/max CD. In a year-end wrap up of cultural events, USA today crowned the work the "Best New Opera of 1998".

Available discs of Mackey's work include *Lost and Found*: Mackey performing his own solo electric guitar music, released by Bridge records in 1996; *Tuck and Roll*: Michael Tilson Thomas conducts orchestral music of Steven Mackey, released in 2001 by BMG/RCA Red Seal; *String Theory*: string Quartets and string quartets plus additional instruments with the Brentano String Quartet released in 2003 on Albany Records; *Heavy Light*: Mosaic plays mixed chamber ensemble music, released in 2004 by New World Records. *Tuck and Roll* and *Lost and Found* made several year-end top ten lists including the New York Times. Individual pieces are included on numerous collections on Nonesuch, BMG/Catalyst, CRI, Newport Classics, and many other labels.

As a guitarist he has performed his own music with the Kronos Quartet, the Arditti Quartet, New World Symphony, the Dutch Radio Symphony, The London Sinfonietta, Nexttime Ensemble (Parma), Psappha (Manchester), Joey Baron. Mackey is currently Professor of Music at Princeton University where he has been a member of the faculty since 1985. He teaches composition, theory, twentieth century music, improvisation and a variety of special topics. As co-director of the Composers Ensemble at Princeton he coaches and conducts new work by student composers as well as twentieth century classics. In 1991, he was awarded the first-ever Distinguished Teaching Award from Princeton University.

ICSO Personnel Block I

Concert 1, Sunday, October 10, 4:00 pm

Flute

Lisa Meyerhofer, principal
Mira Shifrin
Cora Crisman

Oboe

Alana Rosen, principal
Andrew Whitson
Justine Popik

Clarinet

Bradley Pipenger, principal
Emily Dobmeier
Terrance Griswold

Tenor Saxophone

Jason Juliano, principal

Bassoon

Joshua Malison, principal
Margaret Oswald
Adam Gruschow, bsn/cbsn

Horn

Dana Barrett, principal
Margaret Kelly
Elizabeth Kane
William Llarch
Karin Renger, assistant

Trumpet

Jennifer Fox, principal
Nathaniel Sodeur
Tom Pang

Trombone

Alexander Knutrud, principal
Joshua Zimmer
Elizabeth Waltman, bass

Tuba

Seth Magee, principal

Timpani

Anthony DiBartolo, principal

Percussion

Daniel Pessalano, principal
Christopher Demetriou
Jonathan Pereira
Sean Harvey

Harp

Julie Spring, principal

Keyboards

Chad Heltzel, principal

Violin I

Natalie Brandt, concertmaster
Alyssa Jutting
Isaac Shiman
Samantha Spena
Aimee Lillienstein
Amy Schumann
Madeleine Wething
Sadie Kenny
Bryn Digney
Sarah Weber
Emily Frederick
Derek Voigt
Gabriella Colkett
Jason Kim
Jason Calhoun

Violin II

Matteo Longhi, principal
Samantha Hecht
Margaret Dagon
Christopher Sforza
Robin Alfieri
Kristin Bakkegard
Claire Wilcox
Jessica Chen
Christopher Mattaliano
Jenna Trunk
Elizabeth Benz
Sarah Hoag
Nils Schwerzmann
Kathryn Mattner
Jessica Forman

Viola

Zachary Slack, principal
Michael Capone
Kathleen Stevens
Jacquelyn Timberlake
Derik Hensler
Maxwell Aleman
Jennifer Meckler
Stephen Gorgone
Daniel Martinez
Joshua Labman

Cello

Tyler Borden, principal
Erin Snedecor
Jacqueline Georgis
Tristan Rais-Sherman
Rachele Prawdzik
Meredith Gennaro
Thillman Benham
Katharine McShane
Daniel Frankhuizen
Elizabeth Gaston
Hamadi Duggan
William Sharrin

Bass

Jarrett Bastow, principal
Jacob Thurston
John Romey
Kathleen Corcoran
Kevin Gobetz
Benjamin Dows
John DiCarlo
Casey Georgi

Graduate Assistants

Chun-Ming Chen
Marcos Santos

