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Concert: Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra

Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra

Jeffery Meyer

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ITHACA COLLEGE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Jeffery Meyer, conductor
James Giles, piano
Sarah Toth and Sara Mowery, sopranos

Ford Hall
Tuesday, March 3, 2009
8:15 p.m.
PROGRAM

Music for Movies (1943)  
I. New England Countryside  
II. Barley Wagons  
III. Sunday Traffic  
IV. The Story of Grover's Corners  
V. Threshing Machines  

Concerto for Piano  
and Chamber Orchestra (2007)*  
I. Incisif  
II. Lent  
III. Vivace Giacoso  

James Giles, piano

INTERMISSION

La création du monde, Op. 81  
(The Creation of the World)  

I. What's That Spell?  
II. Ballerina  
III. Drum Majorette  
IV. Oh Ken  
V. What's That Spell? (Reprise)  

Sarah Toth and Sara Mowery, sopranos

*United States Premiere

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Program Notes

The hectic and rapidly-changing face of American culture has affected much of the music of the past century, both at home in the United States and abroad. Tonight's program reflects an assimilation of our culture through the past seventy-five years of musical composition and encompasses a plethora of musical styles along the journey.

Music For Movies – Aaron Copland

With their combination of perfect intervals, soaring fanfares, and country-dance rhythms, the compositions of Aaron Copland (1900–1990) embody a writing style that is quintessentially American. And what could be more American than going to the movies? Copland began his career as a film composer with a production of John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men (1939) and made $15,000 on the commission. In that same year, Copland was asked to compose for a documentary entitled The City for the 1939 World's Fair held in New York. Copland combined two excerpts from each of these films and an additional excerpt from Our Town (1940) to create his Music for Movies. Though each of these movements was intended to accompany and intensify the emotional qualities of the film footage, the specific characters Copland creates in each movement are strong and vivid even without the visual associations.

New England Countryside (The City) opens the work with a stately fanfare. The charming, delicate melody of Barley Wagons (Of Mice and Men) is the perfect contrast to Sunday Traffic (The City) that depicts the hustle and bustle of an earlier time. While the pace of the movement quickens, it is not hurried or rushed. A characteristic dotted rhythm is maintained throughout, and the movement concludes with a tongue-and-cheek glissando gesture from the trombone. Story of Grovers Corners (Our Town), with its delicate orchestration and simple arpeggiated melody contains some of Copland's most exquisite and innermost personal writing, while Threshing Machines (Of Mice and Men) is nearly the opposite with its unrelenting sixteenth note ostinato.

Though the work premiered in 1943, the score, with its dedication to Darius Milhaud, was not published until 1970. When Darius Milhaud reflected on Copland's music, he noted "what strikes one immediately in Copland's work is the feeling of the soul of his own country."
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La Creation du Monde – Darius Milhaud

Both to his benefit and ill luck, Darius Milhaud (1892–1974) is best remembered for his connection to the composers in Les Six. Though the group helped publicize his compositions, it also automatically associated him with their frivolity and musical humor. For Milhaud, whose personal interest was in combining popular music and classical forms – a style of composition he took very seriously – being viewed as a musical clown was quite unfortunate.

Milhaud’s interest in popular idioms appeared as early as 1917 when the young composer traveled to Brazil. There he became infatuated with rhythms found in dance music, specifically the choro and the tango. Three years later, he had his first experience with jazz, and in 1922, he traveled to dance halls and night clubs in Harlem hoping to integrate this new culture into his own music.

In 1923, the Ballet Suédois commissioned Milhaud to compose a work depicting an African creation myth – an opportunity Milhaud used to compose a jazz ballet. The work became the innovative La Creation du Monde (The Creation of the World) which incorporates elements of jazz and polytonality into a contemporary chamber ensemble. While he was in Harlem, Milhaud saw Maceo Pinkard’s opera Liza, and copied its instrumentation for his new work; in this case, the alto saxophone plays two roles: soloist and viola section. Though the jazz influence is easily seen in the saxophone’s place of prominence, screeching clarinet solos, and bebop rhythms, it may be more difficult to discern the classical forms found throughout, which include a fully developed fugue led by the double bass.

One of Milhaud’s most personal works, La Creation du Monde takes 1920’s jazz and finds its “hypothetical” roots in the music of prehistoric black Africa. After its first performance, critics reported that the work was frivolous and “better suited for a restaurant or dance hall than the concert hall.” After ten years, the same critics began philosophizing about jazz and its significance as a contemporary art form, and called Milhaud’s La Creation du Monde brilliant and “one of his finest works.”

What's that Spell – Michael Daugherty

American composer Michael Daugherty (b. 1954) is notorious for his references to popular culture in his music, and makes reference to subjects from Jacqueline Onassis in his opera Jackie O to The King himself in Elvis Everywhere (for three Elvis impersonators and String Quartet). Daugherty has several awards to his credit, including the Stoeger Prize from the Chamber Music Society at Lincoln Center, recognition from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and
Letters, and fellowships from the National Endowments for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation. One of the most frequently performed and commissioned composers of our generation, Michael Daugherty's fascination with the vernacular and American icons make him both an admired composer and controversial figure in music today.

Like much of Daugherty's music, *What's That Spell* (1995) contains an unlikely subject: the Mattel Barbie Doll. In the opening movement, two amplified sopranos begin by chanting each of the letters found in Barbie's name and naively asking, "what's that spell?" The second movement opens with a Copland-esque figure in the strings that develops into a scat-like figuration. A comical habanera theme appears in the bassoons while the sopranos plead, "Ballerina, dance for me!" In the third movement, the sopranos imitate the sounds of a marching band and repeatedly saying, "drum majorette!" and marching in time. The fourth movement contains a lamenting line in the oboe and glockenspiel while one lone soprano soloist sings: "I love you, Ken. You know I do. You know I'll always, always only love you, Oh Ken, What can I do? I'm plastic just like you." The final movement recalls the opening of the work, quotes "Sunshine of Your Love" by Cream throughout, and concludes with the sopranos wailing their eternal question on a high D: "What's that spell?"

Notes by Aimée Shorten

James Giles regularly performs to acclaim in important musical centers in America, Europe, and Asia. The past few seasons have included two tours of China, performances in Italy, Russia, and Bosnia, and a recital at Warsaw's Chopin Academy of Music. In an eclectic repertoire encompassing the solo and chamber music literatures, Giles is equally at home in the standard repertoire as in the music of our time. He has commissioned and premiered works by William Bolcom, C. Curtis-Smith, Stephen Hough, Lowell Liebermann, Ned Rorem, Augusta Read Thomas, Earl Wild, and James Wintle. Most of these new works are featured on Giles's Albany Records release entitled "American Virtuoso."

His Paris recital at the Salle Cortot in 2004 was hailed as "a true revelation, due equally to the pianist's artistry as to his choice of program." After a recital at the Sibelius Academy, the critic for Helsinki's main newspaper wrote that "Giles is a technically polished, elegant pianist." And a London critic called his 2003 Wigmore Hall recital "one of the most shearly inspired piano recitals I can remember hearing for some time" and added that "with a riveting intelligence given to everything he played, it was the kind of recital you never really forget." He has performed with New York's Jupiter Symphony; the London Soloists Chamber
Orchestra in Queen Elizabeth Hall; the Kharkiv Philharmonic in Ukraine; and with the Opera Orchestra of New York in Alice Tully Hall. After his Tully Hall solo recital debut, critic Harris Goldsmith wrote: “Giles has a truly distinctive interpretive persona. This was beautiful pianism – direct and unmannered.”

A native of North Carolina, Dr. Giles studied with Byron Janis at the Manhattan School of Music, Jerome Lowenthal at the Juilliard School, Nelita True at the Eastman School of Music, and Robert Shannon at Oberlin College. Dr. Giles is on the piano faculty at Northwestern University and is the chair of the piano department at the Eastern Music Festival during the summers.

Composer and pianist Timothy Dunne has performed extensively throughout The United States, Europe, Brazil and in St. Petersburg Russia where he has lived since 2002. He is currently Project Director of ‘Twenty Views’, a concert performance of Messiaen’s Vingt Regards sur l’Enfant-Jésus performed by 20 pianists in St. Petersburg’s Glinka Hall, and is an Artistic Advisor for both the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic and for the cultural art fund, Art Modern. Timothy Dunne is also Co-founder and Co-director since 2000 of The Mostar Fund, a non-for-profit organization dedicated to cultural rehabilitation projects in Mostar, Bosnia Herzegovina where he has directed the Festival of Contemporary Music since 2004. His compositional work has won him awards from the Vienna Universität für Musik und Darnstellende Kunst (2006) and he has appeared as both piano soloist and composer in various festivals in Europe and Russia since 2002.

Born on Long Island, New York, Timothy Dunne began playing piano at age five and composing shortly thereafter. From age 9 to 18 he was a student in piano and music theory of Doctor Fred Mendelsohn on his native Long Island before going on to obtain his Bachelors of Music from The Oberlin Conservatory of Music. He received a Masters in Piano Performance from The Indiana School of Music and a Professional Studies Certificate from The Manhattan School of Music. He studied under famed piano pedagogues Vitaly Margulis (in Freiburg, Germany) and with Sedmara Zakarian and Yoheved Kaplinsky in the United States.

From 1992-2002 Timothy Dunne was Director of the Classical Concert Series in Spencertown, New York and was an active chamber music player, and concertized in solo recitals, piano-four hands and as concerto soloist. He was a faculty member of the Diller Quaile School of Music in New York from 1995-2002. As soloist his concerts and recitals have taken him to London, Denmark, Hamburg, Tallinn, many European countries from France
to Romania and from cities on three continents as diverse as Sao Paulo and Novgorod. Since 1999 Bosnia Herzegovina has played a large educational and creative role in the composer/pianist’s professional life mixing education, classical, contemporary and improvisational performance in more than a dozen trips to the former Yugoslavian country. For this work he has been the recipient of grants from The Trust For Mutual Understanding, The Aga Khan and The William and Mary Greve Foundations among others.

Making a radical and life-defining decision in 2002 he applied for and received a Fulbright Scholarship to Russia in order to study formal composition with Sergei Slonimsky (nephew of Nikolas Sloniinsky) at the St. Petersburg State Conservatory of Music. This decision was made in part due to Dunne’s interest in Russian linguistics and literature and in particular with Mikhail Bulgakov’s novel The Master and Margarita for which Slonimsky and Dunne’s other composition teacher, Nigel Osborne, had written operas and which remains the focus of his doctoral dissertation.

Apart from an active compositional life in Russia where he has been a teaching assistant in composition to Slonimsky, Dunne has been given the distinguished and frequent honor of premiering new works for the piano by contemporary masters including Luciano Berio’s Piano Sonata, György Ligeti’s Third Volume of Piano Etudes, and other works by Boulez, Fernyhough and more.

Sara Mowery is a senior vocal performance major at Ithaca College. Recently, she has performed La Chauve-Souris in L’enfant et les sortilèges and Arminda in La finta giardiniera in IC mainstage operas. In the upcoming IC Opera Workshop production of Suor Angelica, she will play Suor Dolcina. Sara is from the voice studio of Randie Blooding.

Sarah Toth is a first-year graduate student in vocal performance. She graduated summa cum laude in 2006 with a double Bachelors degree in Vocal Performance and Sociology from Greenville College in Greenville, IL. Last year, she was a third-place finalist in the Advanced B division of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) Finger Lakes chapter. Recently, she was featured as a soloist in Pergolesi’s Stabat Mater with the Ithaca College Women’s Choral, and served as a cover for La bergère and L’écureuil in L’enfant et les sortilèges, Ithaca College’s mainstage opera. Sarah is in the voice studio of Patrice Pastore.
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 presently 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 the 2008-09 season, he assumed the position of artistic director of the Water City Chamber Orchestra, northeast Wisconsin’s only professional chamber orchestra.

Called “one of the most interesting and creatively productive conductors working in St. Petersburg” by Sergei Slonimsky, 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. 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 recently awarded third prize in the Tenth International "Antonio Pedrotti" Conducting Competition.
ITHACA COLLEGE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Jeffery Meyer, conductor

Violin I
Andrew Bergevin, concertmaster
Kate Goldstein
Laura Sciavolino
Will Downey
Tim Ball
Colin Oettle
Alyssa Jutting

Violin II
Ellen Kogut*
Ian Salmon
Natalie Brandt
Sharon Mohar
Gabriella Colkett
Aimee Lillienstein

Viola
Rosie Newton*
Kathryn Kimble
Nicole Wright
Jennifer Meckler
Zachary Slack

Cello
Tyler Borden*
Allison Rehn
Daniel Frankhuizen
Evan Hong
Tristan Rais-Sherman

Bass
Joseph Arcuri*
Kyle Kresge
Kevin Gobetz

Flute
Jacquie Christen*
Aimée Shorten

Oboe
Alicia Rockenhauser*
Jamie Davis

Clarinet
Adam Butalewicz*
Marcus Christian

Bassoon
Josh Malison*
Margaret Fay

Saxophone
Ryan Salisbury
Ian Cruz
Benjamin Faris

Horn
Rose Valby*
Lori Roy

Trumpet
Cyril Bodnar*
Ethan Urtz

Trombone
Andrew Bennett*

Keyboards
Elena Nezhidanova
Nathan Gulla
Kevin Ryan

Guitar
Adam Vera

Accordion/Keyboard
Brendan Vavra
Nathan Gulla

Timpani/Percussion
Andrew Boynton

Percussion
Marco Schirripa
Andrew Thomson

Graduate Assistants
Kevin Ryan
Jesse Livingston

Harp
Myra Kovary**

* principal
** guest artist