10-6-2006

Concert: Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra

Jeffery Meyer

Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra

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ITHACA COLLEGE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

ITHACA COLLEGE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Jeffery Meyer, conductor

Ford Hall
Friday, October 6, 2006
8:15 p.m.
PROGRAM

Shaker Loops (Rev. 1982)  
Part 1.  Shaking and Trembling  
Part 2.  Hymning Slews  
Part 3.  Loops and Versus  
Part 4.  A Final Shaking  

John Adams  
(b. 1947)

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 101 (The Clock)  
I.  Adagio-Presto  
II.  Andante  
III.  Menuet-Trio: Allegretto  
IV.  Finale: Vivace  

Franz Joseph Haydn  
(1732-1809)

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Program Notes

John Coolidge Adams, one of the foremost American composers of our time, was born in Massachusetts in 1947 and now lives in California. The original version of Shaker Loops (for string septet) was written in 1978, soon thereafter to be arranged for string orchestra, and the work is an exemplary example of the blossoming minimalist music of the time, which has taken its place in the standard 20th century repertoire. The title is a reference to the musical term "to shake", meaning either to make a tremolo with the bow across the string or else to trill rapidly from one note to another. It is also a reference to the rituals of the early American religious sect called the Shakers. In fact, Adams grew up not far from the remains of an old Shaker colony. He says that "as a boy, whenever I'd passed by this spare collection of austere houses, I would try to imagine what a Shaker ceremony must have felt like—those normally stern souls suddenly sprung loose in a rapture of religious ecstasy as they "shook" in sympathetic vibrations with their Creator." The term "loops" has to do with the compositional construction of the work, the looping of melodic material.

Adams states:

Shaker Loops began as a string quartet with the title Wavemaker. At the time, like many a young composer, I was essentially unaware of the nature of those musical materials I had chosen for my tools. Having experienced a few of the seminal pieces of American Minimalism during the early 1970's, I thought their combination of stripped-down harmonic and rhythmic discourse might be just the ticket for my own unformed yearnings. I gradually developed a scheme for composing that was partly indebted to the repetitive procedures of Minimalism and partly an outgrowth of my interest in waveforms. The "waves" of Wavemaker were to be long sequences of oscillating melodic cells that created a rippling, shimmering complex of patterns like the surface of a slightly agitated pond or lake. But my technique lagged behind my inspiration, and this rippling pond very quickly went dry. Wavemaker crashed and burned at its first performance. The need for a larger, thicker ensemble and for a more flexible, less theory-bound means of composing became very apparent.

Fortunately, I had in my students at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music an ensemble willing to tryout new ideas, and with the original Wavemaker scrapped, I worked over the next four months to pick up the pieces and start over. I held on to the idea of the oscillating patterns and made an overall structure that could embrace much more variety and emotional range. Most importantly the quartet became a septet, thereby adding a sonic mass and the potential for more acoustical power. The "loops" idea was a technique from the era of tape music where small lengths of prerecorded tape attached end to end could repeat melodic or rhythmic figures ad infinitum. (Steve Reich's It's Gonna Rain is the paradigm of this technique.) The Shakers got into the act partly as a pun on the musical term "to shake", meaning either to make a tremolo with the bow across the string or else to trill rapidly from one note to another. The flip side of the pun was suggested by my own childhood memories of growing up not far from a defunct Shaker colony.
near Canterbury, New Hampshire. Although, as has since been pointed out to me, the term "Shaker" itself is derogatory, it nevertheless summons up the vision of these otherwise pious and industrious souls caught up in the ecstatic frenzy of a dance that culminated in an epiphany of physical and spiritual transcendence. This dynamic, almost electrically charged element, so out of place in the orderly mechanistic universe of Minimalism, gave the music its *raison d'etre* and ultimately led to the full realization of the piece. *Shaker Loops* continues to be one of my most performed pieces."

The work is approximately 25 minutes long and the listener will find reward in becoming absorbed in the ecstatic, moment-by-moment details of the pieces and experiencing them as they transform into various emotional/spiritual states over the span of the work.

In the early 1790s, **Franz Joseph Haydn** made two extended trips to London, spending a total of three years there, and the appreciative London audiences were treated to some of the most masterful and entertaining works for orchestra of his career. In total, he composed twelve symphonies (Symphonies 93-104) during that time, six for each of his two highly successful trips, and each enjoyed an extremely favorable reception. The Symphony No. 101 became known as "The Clock" obviously due to the coyly mechanical accompaniment figure in the second movement. The work was premiered in 1794.

- Notes by JM
ITHACA COLLEGE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Jeffrey Meyer, conductor

Violin I
Joshua Modney, concertmaster
Chris Jones
Brian Hwang
Mary Raschella
Vicki Kuchta
Natalie Brandt

Violin II
Andrew Bergevin, principal
Kate Goldstein
Megan Atchley
Brenna Gillette
Natasha Colkett
Colin Oettle

Viola
Lauren Buono, principal
Nicole Wright
Holly Rose-Jones
Jaime Kibelsbeck

Cello
Jennifer Chieffalo, principal
Matthew Rotjan
Laura Messina
Sam Boase-Miller

Bass
Patrick O'Connell, principal
Paul Feissner

Flute
Megan Postoll, principal
Leslie Harrison

Oboe
Megan Kimball, principal
Noelle Drewes

Clarinet
Lauren Del Re, principal
Will Cicola

Bassoon
Jeff Ward, principal
Amy Zordan-Moore

Horn
Rose Valby, principal
Michael Bellofatto

Trumpet
Calvin Rice, principal
Joseph Brown

Percussion
Jason Taylor, timpani