12-13-2018

Concert: Ithaca College Wind Ensemble The 50th Anniversary of Karel Husa's Music for Prague 1968

Christopher Hughes

Alyssa Comeau

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Ithaca College Wind Ensemble
The 50th Anniversary of Karel Husa's Music for Prague 1968

Christopher Hughes, conductor
Alyssa Comeau, graduate conductor

Ford Hall
Thursday, December 13th, 2018
8:15 pm
Program

Short Ride in a Fast Machine

John Adams
(b. 1947)

Alyssa Comeau, graduate conductor

Symphony No. 10: The River of Time

David Maslanka
(1943-2017)
with Matthew Maslanka
(b. 1982)

I. Alison
II. Mother and Boy Watching the River of Time
III. David
IV. One Breath in Peace

Brief Intermission

Music for Prague 1968

Karel Husa
(1921-2016)

I. Introduction and Fanfare
II. Aria
III. Interlude
IV. Toccata and Chorale
**Program Notes**

**Short Ride in a Fast Machine**

When asked what is the essential thing that differentiates American music from all others, John Adams stated, “The one thing is the incessant pulsation.” Based on this, *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* is quintessential. He explained his title, asking, “You know how it is when someone asks you to ride in a terrific sports car, and then you wish you hadn’t?” He further explained on *Fresh Air*, that “The image that I had while composing this piece was a ride that I once took in a sports car. A relative of mine had bought a Ferrari, and he asked me late one night to take a ride in it and we went out onto the highway....it was an absolutely terrifying experience to be in a car driven by somebody who wasn’t really a skilled driver.” The Ferrari sports car specs state that it could go from zero to 100 miles per hour in 15.9 seconds. With this experience in mind, in 1986 he wrote a fanfare for a large symphony orchestra... a “bright, happy piece of music,” which is “very difficult to play but quite a bit of fun.” *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* was composed for the Pittsburgh Symphony as the curtain raiser for a summer festival, “Great Woods.”

One of the most powerful early influences on the composer was a style called minimalism, and this work has often been called a “triumph of minimalism.” Minimalism embraces consonant harmonies, motoric rhythms, repetitive melodic motifs and patterns. In contrast to “pure” minimalism, Mr. Adams’ music moves forward, stimulated in its momentum by other 20th century inflections, references to the past in rich harmonies, lyrical sweeps, and his desire to attain “sustained resonance.” Moving away from highly dissonant sounds, Mr. Adams chooses a more consonant route in what he calls his “diatonic conversion.” “This made me realize the resonant power of consonance. There is such a lack of resonance in atonal music with all the upper partials clashing against each other. The composers that mean the most to me are those whose music is music of sustained resonance,” he explained. Michael Steinberg in the John Adams Reader wrote that [*Short Ride in a Fast Machine* used] “a harmonic language with an emphasis on consonance unlike anything in Western art music in the last five hundred years.”

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Symphony No. 10: The River of Time

Symphony No. 10 was commissioned by a consortium headed by Stephen K. Steele, Scott Hagen (University of Utah), and Onsby Rose (The Ohio State University). My father passed away while writing the work. I completed the composition based on his sketches.

At the time of his death, my father had fully completed the first movement and half of the second. The remainder of the second movement and the whole of the fourth movement were sketched out. The third movement (“the hard node”) had an opening sketched, but the rest was in fragments. Dad asked me to finish the work if he were unable to complete it. I drew on my long experience working with dad and his music to first understand the sketches and then to piece them together.

Dad titled the completed first movement after his wife and my mother: “Alison.” He was writing as my mother was dying of an immune disorder in the spring of 2017. This movement may be seen through that lens, with bitter rage at the coming loss and a beautiful song full of love.

I have named the subsequent movements. The second movement’s title, “Mother and Boy Watching the River of Time,” comes from my father’s final pencil sketch of the same name. It depicts two small figures sitting on a river bank in front of a forest and mountain foothills. The music is largely a transcription of the second movement of the euphonium sonata he wrote for me, Song Lines.

The third movement posed a special challenge. The movement was both at the emotional center of the symphony and the least finished. One tune, marked “The Song at the Heart of it All” in the sketch, became the heart of the work and of the symphony. The full statement of the theme may be found at bar 174, with a quiet restatement in the solo euphonium at bar 217. It is a pure expression of love: my love for my father, his love for me, my mother, sister, and brother, and by extension, love for humanity. The restatement of the opening material, though at first comforting, becomes jarring and unsettled, rising to a dissonant roar. The euphonium soloist is left to scream, “why?!” at world that seems content to keep spinning. The third movement became my response to the deaths of my mother and father. It is not what dad would have written; rather, it is a synthesis of his mind and his, colored by extraordinary pain and loss. I have named the movement after my father.

The fourth movement, “One Breath in Peace,” is the acceptance and ability to move forward after loss. The long solo lines for oboe reflect and extend the bookending chorale, “Jesu, der du meine Seele”.

Dad’s customary morning practice was to play one chorale from the
Bach 371 Chorales. He would sing each line as he played along on the piano. In this way, he came to deeply understand these miniature jewels of western music. I have closed the symphony with the last statement of the chorale, with the pianist singing the tenor line. I hope you will hear his voice in it.

- Matthew Maslanka, April 2018

Music for Prague 1968

*Music for Prague 1968* was commissioned by the Ithaca College Concert Band and composed during the summer and fall of 1968 for the capitol city of Czechoslovakia. The work was premiered by the commissioning ensemble in Washington D.C. on January 31, 1969, Dr. Kenneth Snapp conducting, in a concert for the music Education National Conference.

Three main ideas bind the composition together. The first and most important is an old Hussite war song from the 15th century, "Ye Warriors of God and His Law," a symbol of resistance and hope for hundreds of years, whenever fate lay heavy on the Czech nation. It has been utilized also by many Czech composers, including Smetana in My Country. The beginning of this religious song is announced very softly in the first movement by the timpani and concludes in a strong unison (Chorale). The song is never used in its entirety.

The second idea is the sound of bells throughout; Prague, named also the City of "Hundreds of Towers," has used its magnificently sounding church bells as calls of distress as well as of victory.

The last idea is a motif of three chords first appearing very softly under the piccolo solo at the beginning of the piece, in flutes, clarinets and horns. Later it reappears at extremely strong dynamic levels, for example, in the middle of the Aria.

Different techniques of composing as well as orchestrating have been used in Music for Prague 1968 and some new sounds explored, such as the percussion section in the Interlude, the ending of the work, etc. Much symbolism also appears: in addition to the distress calls in the first movement (Fanfares), the unbroken hope of the Hussite song, sound of bells, or the tragedy (Aria), there is also the bird call at the beginning (piccolo solo), symbol of the liberty which the City of Prague has seen only for moments during its thousand years of existence.

- Karel Husa
Ithaca College Wind Ensemble

**Piccolo:**
Leandra Stirling

**Flute:**
Jeannette Lewis
Timothy Mullins

**Oboe:**
Bethany Cripps
Raelene Ford
Kaitlyn Schneider (E. Horn)

**Bassoon:**
Eden Treado (Contra)
Julian Gorring
Cam Billings (Contra)

**Clarinet:**
Steven Foti
Francesca Ferraro
Emma Dwyer
Jacob Friga
Griffin Charyn
Esther Moon (Eb)
Jeffery Elrick (Contra)
Valerie Nuzzolo (Bass)

**Saxophone:**
Keilah Figueroa
Jessica Small
Sara Mercurio (Tenor)
Jared Banker (Baritone)
Dunham Hall (Bass)

**Horn:**
Ben Futterman
Nicoletta Pignatello
Christian DeFreese
Sydney Rosen
Sarah Pulver

**Trumpet:**
Elliot Lowe
Jennifer Rupert
Evan Schreiber
Austin Rannestad
Averi Parece
Stephen Ryan
Shaun Rimkunas
Hayden Bustamante

**Trombone:**
Kurt Eide
Eric Coughlin
Sean Bessette (Bass)

**Euphonium:**
James Yoon
Elizabeth Rutan

**Tuba:**
Jasmine Pigott
Brandon Bartschatt

**Piano:**
Michail Konstantinos
Chalkiopoulos
Da-sol Um
Sungmin Kim

**Timpani:**
Will Hope

**Percussion:**
Katie McInerney
Brian Breen
Ethan Cowburn
Leah Gardner
Alex Hoerig
Julia Lavernoich
Biographies

Dr. Christopher Hughes is Director of Bands and Associate Professor of Music for the School of Music at Ithaca College in New York. Hughes serves as conductor of the renowned Ithaca College Wind Ensemble while leading the acclaimed graduate program in wind conducting. Prior to this position, Dr. Hughes served as Director of Bands and Graduate Conducting Coordinator at NM State University and as Director of Bands and Chair of the Conducting and Ensembles Faculty for the College of Music at Mahidol University, a conservatory setting in Bangkok, Thailand. Prior to his move overseas, Dr. Hughes held positions on the faculties at Lander University in South Carolina and the University of Colorado at Boulder. Hughes’s former students hold conducting and teaching positions in China, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, The Philippines, Burma, Mexico and throughout the United States.

Born on Bloomsday in Aspen, Colorado, Hughes's interest in the expressive beauty of music began early. He decided to pursue conducting as a profession after experiencing the artistry of many of the legendary conductors who were in residence at the Aspen Music School. In 2005 Hughes was awarded the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in instrumental conducting and literature at the University of Colorado at Boulder where he was a student of world-renowned conductor and Distinguished Professor Allan McMurray. Developing an impressive profile that is both national and international, Dr. Hughes has conducted ensembles in concert on four continents including Europe, Asia, Australia and North America. He is also in constant demand as a guest conductor and clinician. Engagements have taken him to several US states, Washington, D.C. and ten foreign countries including England, Ireland, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Indonesia. In 2017 Hughes was invited as the guest clinician for the Conducting Symposium of the Americas in Costa Rica. Hughes was also invited to conduct in Australia at the Queensland Conservatorium. In his first year at Ithaca College, Hughes lead the IC Wind Ensemble in two major invited performances; one for the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) conference and one at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Arts in Washington, D.C. In addition to numerous performances as Resident Guest Conductor for the Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra, Dr. Hughes led the Mahidol University Wind Symphony in a critically acclaimed performance during the proceedings of the15th World Saxophone Congress. This subsequently led to an invitation for the musicians to appear as the guest artist ensemble for the Australian National Ensemble Championships. Hughes has conducted at the Southeast Asian Youth Orchestra and Wind Ensemble Festival in Bangkok, Thailand and the Honor Ensemble Festival of the Interscholastic Association of Southeast Asian Schools in Jakarta, Indonesia. Dr. Hughes was honored to serve as guest conductor for the National Symphony
Orchestra players of Taiwan during his invited visit to Chiayi City. In 2013 and again in 2014 Hughes ventured to China to conduct the Directors Ensemble of Guangzhou Province and appeared in ShanXi, ShanDong, and Chengdu provinces in as well. Known for his sensitive interpretation of music for large and small instrumental ensembles, Hughes's conducting has drawn praise from composers and conductors in the United States, Canada, Southeast Asia, China, and Australia.

A champion of new music, Dr. Hughes has conducted numerous world and regional premieres and he has become a conductor of choice for contemporary works. Dr. Hughes has, on several occasions, been included in the Who's Who Among America's Teachers publication and, for the past 13 years, he has been listed in Who's Who in America. He was recently honored with induction into Who's Who In The World. Hughes's affiliations include the International Conductor's Guild, College Band Directors National Association, World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles, New York State School Music Association, Phi Mu Alpha (honorary), and Kappa Kappa Psi (honorary).

**Alyssa Comeau** is a Master of Music in wind conducting candidate at Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY where she is a graduate assistant to the director of bands, and assistant conductor of the Ithaca College Campus Band. She graduated in 2013 with her Bachelors degree in Music Education K-12 from Keene State College in Keene, NH. Comeau was the music director at Profile Junior, Senior High School in Bethlehem, NH for four years where she led the high school concert band, the middle school concert band, 7th-12th grade chorus, pep band, pit band, and an a cappella group. Additional responsibilities included teaching introduction to guitar, music in film analysis, general music for 8th graders, directing the fall musical and being a class advisor. She was selected to conduct the North Country High School Music Festival Concert Band in 2015 as guest conductor. Alyssa has been the principal reed player for the Weathervane Theater Company, a professional theater company in Whitefield, NH, for 10 years. While in Keene, Alyssa auditioned for and was accepted into the All New England Intercollegiate Honors Band all four years of her undergraduate degree on the clarinet. Alyssa studied clarinet under Dr. Craig Sylvern and Stephanie Jenkins, and she studied conducting under Dr. James Chesebrough and Don Baldini. Comeau’s professional affiliations include New Hampshire Music Educators Association, the National Association for Music Education, and the College Band Directors National Association.
The IC Bands would like to extend a very special thank you to...

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