

FORBES CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY®

School of Music

Presents

Symphonic Band

Stephen P. Bolstad, *conductor*

Isaac McMahon, *MM graduate conductor*

Tuesday, October 29, 2019

8 pm

Concert Hall



There is no intermission.

Program

Divertimento for Band (1950)

Vincent Persichetti
(1915-1987)

- I. Prologue
- II. Song
- III. Dance
- IV. Burlesque
- V. Soliloquy
- VI. March

Hymn to the Blue Hour (2010)

John Mackey
(b. 1973)

Isaac McMahon, *MM graduate conductor*

Southern Harmony (1998)

Donald Grantham
(b. 1947)

- I. The Midnight Cry
- II. Wondrous Love
- III. Exhilaration
- IV. The Soldier's Return/Thorny Desert

Into the Silent Land (2018)

Steve Danyew
(b. 1983)

Erica Unroe, *narrator*

Cajun Folk Song 2 (1997)

Frank Ticheli
(b. 1958)

- I. Ballad
- II. Country Dance

Conga del Fuego Nuevo (2001/2011)

Arturo Marquez
(b. 1950)

Personnel

Flute/Piccolo

*Anna Clark – Ashburn
Ariel Collins – Chesapeake
Alexia Diez-Fugitt – Gainesville
Julia Fabian – Sterling

Oboe/English Horn

*Rebekah Gernert – Reading, MA
Noah Johnson – North Chesterfield
Mekhi Tyree – Lynchburg

Bassoon/Contra

Summer Davis – Madison
Hanna Maranzatto – Cape Coral, FL
Devon Petrecca – Fairfax
*Matthew Tignor – Midlothian

Clarinet

Justus Butler – Stuarts Draft
Ben Dingus – South Riding
Paige Elmquist – Leesburg
Austin Gillbert – Haymarket
Janelle Harris – Waynesboro
*Jimmy McKenzie – Westminster, MD

Bass Clarinet

Rebecca Kenaga – Culpeper

Alto Saxophone

*Ian Cox – Woodbridge
Nick Monger – Modlothian

Tenor Saxophone

Jay Fenner – Eldersburg, MD

Baritone Saxophone

Brandon Rhinehart – Winchester

Piano

Thomas Hassett – Arlington

Harp

Sophia Shedd – Chesapeake

Trumpet

Johanna Bagay – Norfolk
Britney Bennett – Abingdon
Sammie Cohen – Crozet
Jacob Fujioka – Springfield
Sophia Harrison – Richmond
*Nina Lončar – Sterling
Beth Moore – Fairfax
Justin Thornton – Virginia Beach

Horn

Bailey Furrow – Ferrum
Scarlett Sullivan – Herndon
*Jackson VanHyning – Broadway
*Sarah Zotian – Fairfax

Trombone

*Halen Anderson – Alexandria
Sam Campbell – Ashburn
Sarah Dodge – Staunton
Rob Jackson – Stafford
Henry Thompson – Virginia Beach
Isaiah Tomalesky – Winchester

Euphonium

Alex Dumouchelle – Ashburn
*Ryan Hylton – Broadway
Julia Picchiettino – Herndon

Tuba

*Mitchell Evans – Highland, MD
Josh Smith – Grottoes
Zach Winkworth – Rappahannock

String Bass

Keely Kinnanae – Virginia Beach

Percussion

John Donnell – Annandale
*Don Gatz – Newport News
Aaron Green – Woodbridge
Brandon Lee – Herndon
Andrew Sheloski – Stafford
Trevor Trout – York, PA

* denotes principal/co-principal

denotes graduate student

The James Madison University Symphonic Band uses a rotational seating system to emphasize the importance of each performer, therefore, each section is listed alphabetically.

Program Notes

Divertimento for Band

Vincent Persichetti (1915-1987) was a piano and organ prodigy who was supporting himself with his musical talents by age 11. A lifelong Philadelphia resident, he took full advantage of the city's musical institutions. At age 20, he was simultaneously the head of the music department at Combs College, a conducting major with Fritz Reiner at the Curtis Institute, and a piano and composition student at the Philadelphia Conservatory. His distinctly original compositions began to be recognized internationally before he was 30. His skyrocketing reputation led to his appointment at the Juilliard School, where he became the chair of the composition department at age 47. He died in 1987, leaving behind a unique body of work in almost every musical medium, including a number of masterpieces for the wind band. Among these is the *Divertimento for Band, op. 42*, written for the Goldman Band.

Persichetti started writing this piece in 1949 with an orchestra in mind. He began with a prologue that featured the brass section tossing the woodwinds back and forth. Midway through this movement, he realized that the strings were never going to enter - thus began Persichetti's impressive oeuvre of sophisticated, accessible wind music. The *Divertimento* showcases the composer's lyricism, playfulness, harmonic daring, and superb orchestration skills, all while remaining accessible to the player and listener.

Program note by Andy Pease

Hymn to the Blue Hour

The blue hour is an oft-poeticized moment of the day - a lingering twilight that halos the sky after sundown but before complete darkness sets in. It is a time of day known for its romantic, spiritual, and ethereal connotations, and this magical moment has frequently inspired artists to attempt to capture its remarkable essence. This is the same essence that inhabits the sonic world of John Mackey's *Hymn to a Blue Hour*.

Programmatic content aside, the title itself contains two strongly suggestive implications - first, the notion of hymnody, which implies a transcendent and perhaps even sacred tone; and second, the color blue, which as an inexorable tie to American music. Certainly *Hymn to a Blue Hour* is not directly influenced by the blues, per se, but there is frequently throughout the piece a sense of nostalgic remorse and longing - an overwhelming sadness that is the same as the typically morose jazz form. Blue also has a strong affiliation with nobility, authority, and calmness. All of these notions are woven into the fabric of the piece - perhaps a result of Mackey using what was, for him, an unconventional compositional method:

"I almost never write music 'at the piano' because I don't have any piano technique. I can find chords, but I play piano like a bad typist types: badly. If I write the music using an instrument where I can barely get by, the result will be very different than if I sit at the computer and just throw a zillion notes at my sample library, all of which will be executed perfectly and at any dynamic level I ask. We spent the summer at an apartment in New York that had a nice upright piano. I don't have a piano at home in Austin - only a digital keyboard - and it was very different to sit and write at a real piano with real pedals and a real action, and to do so in the middle of one of the most exciting and energetic (and loud) cities in America. The result - partially thanks to my lack of piano technique, and partially, I suspect, from a subconscious need to balance the noise and relentless energy of the city surrounding me at the time - is much simpler and lyrical music than I typically write."

Though not composed as a companion work to his earlier *Aurora Awakes*, *Hymn to a Blue Hour* strikes at many of the same chords, only in a sort of programmatic inversion. While *Aurora Awakes* deals with the emergence of light from darkness, *Hymn to a Blue Hour* is thematically linked to the moments just after sundown - perhaps even representing the same moment a half a world away. The opening slow section of *Aurora Awakes* does share some similar harmonic content, and the yearning within the melodic brushstrokes seem to be cast in the same light.

The piece is composed largely from three recurring motives - first, a cascade of falling thirds; second, a stepwise descent that provides a musical sigh; and third, the descent's reverse: an ascent that imbues hopeful optimism. From the basic framework of these motives stated at the outset of the work, a beautiful duet emerges between horn and euphonium - creating a texture spun together into a pillowy blanket of sound, reminiscent of similar constructions elicited by great American melodists of the 20th century, such as Samuel Barber. This melody superimposes a sensation of joy over the otherwise "blue" emotive context - a melodic line that over a long period of time spins the work to a point of catharsis. In this climactic moment, the colors are at their brightest, enveloping their surroundings with an angelic glow. Alas, as is the case with the magical blue hour, the moment cannot last for long, and just as steadily as they arrived, the colors dissipate into the encroaching darkness, eventually succumbing at the work's conclusion with a sense of peaceful repose.

Program note by Jake Wallace.

Southern Harmony

In 1835, William "Singin' Billy" Walker's songbook *Southern Harmony* was first published. This remarkable collection contains, according to its title page, "a choice collection of tunes, hymns, psalms, odes, and anthems; selected from the most eminent authors in the United States." In fact, few of the numbers in the

book are identified as the work of a particular composer. Many are folk songs (provided with religious texts), others are traditional sacred tunes, while some are revival songs that were widely known and sung throughout the South. The book was immensely popular, selling an amazing 600,000 copies before the Civil War, and was commonly stocked “along with groceries and tobacco” in general stores across the American frontier. From 1884 until World War II, an annual all-day mass performance of selections from *Southern Harmony*, called the “Benton Big Singing,” was held on the Benton, Kentucky courthouse lawn. The event drew participants from Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and Illinois.

The music of *Southern Harmony* has a somewhat exotic sound to modern audiences. The tunes often use modal or pentatonic scales rather than major or minor scales. The harmony is even more out of the ordinary, employing chord positions, voice leading, and progressions that are far removed from the European music that dominated concert halls at the time. These harmonizations were dismissed as crude and primitive when they first appeared. Now they are regarded as inventive, unique, and powerfully representative of the American character.

In his use of several tunes from *Southern Harmony*, the composer has attempted to preserve the flavor of the original vocal works in a setting that fully realizes the potential of the wind ensemble and the individual character of each song.

Program note by the composer

Into the Silent Land

On December 14, 2012, twenty children and six educators were killed by a gunman at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Sandy Hook, Connecticut. Having grown up in Sandy Hook just a mile from the school, this is where I attended grades 3-5.

For the past several years, I have thought about writing a piece of music that would reflect on this tragedy, but I have struggled to know where to start. Even after beginning to sketch out ideas for this piece, I felt unsure of where the piece should go and what it should communicate. In an effort to find a clearer sense of direction, I searched for poetry that reflected how I was feeling.

When I came across “Remember,” a moving poem by Christina Rossetti, I found the direction I was looking for. Through the simple idea of remembering - not forgetting that this happened, not forgetting these children, not forgetting the grief that their families must feel - I realized this is what I wanted and needed to communicate through music.

The music incorporates elements of a funeral march, as well as a lament, using a descending tetrachord as a ground bass. The funeral march and the lament are

combined early in the piece and after the ground bass repeats and grows to a climax, the funeral march gradually fades and a more ethereal music emerges.

Into the Silent Land was commissioned by a consortium of schools and individuals led by Dr. Jared Chase and Nazareth College.

Program note by the composer

Cajun Folk Songs 2

Cajuns are descendants of the Acadians, a group of early French colonists who began settling in Acadia (now Nova Scotia) around 1604. In 1755 they were driven out by the British, eventually resettling in South Louisiana. Today, there are nearly a million French-speaking descendants of the Acadians living in Louisiana and parts of Texas, preserving many of the customs, traditions, stories, and songs of their answers.

Although a rich Cajun folksong tradition exists, the music has become increasingly commercialized and Americanized throughout the twentieth century, obscuring its original simplicity and directness. In response to this trend, Alan and John Lomax traveled to South Louisiana in 1934 to collect and record numerous Cajun folksongs in the field for the *Archive of Folk Music* in the Library of Congress. By doing so, they helped to preserve Cajun music in its original form as a pure and powerful expression of Louisiana French Society.

Continuing and expanding the style of his first set of *Cajun Folk Songs*, Ticheli has written a work in two contrasting movements. The first, *Ballad*, is a melancholy song fleshed out with starkly beautiful textures and harmonies. This breathtaking movement gives way to a brash and energetic cowboy hoe-down that is delightfully entertaining.

Program note by the publisher

Conga del Fuego Nuevo

Following the success of Márquez's *Danzón No. 2*, adapted for band, Oliver Nickel's transcription of *Conga del Fuego Nuevo* (Conga of New Fire) gives an added kick to the concert band repertoire. In contrast to the elegant, sinuous *Danzón*, the *Conga* is an uptempo, celebratory piece, bright and catchy, with the percussion section providing the signature kick at the end of the conga pattern. Márquez slows things down in the middle section to spotlight the first trumpet in a melody that recalls the mariachi tradition. The alto saxes pick it up and relax into a ritard, only to be interrupted by the return of the opening material. The piece ends in a fiery fashion.

Program note by the publisher

Upcoming Events

Faculty Recital - Beth Chandler, <i>flute</i>	Wed., Oct 30 @ 8 pm, Recital Hall*
JMU Percussion Ensemble	Thurs., Oct 31 @ 8 pm, Concert Hall*
Music Library Art Show	Fri., Nov 1, @5 pm, Music Library
Masterpiece Season - Cory Band	Fri., Nov 1, @ 8 pm, Concert Hall*
JMU Jazz Combos	Tues., Nov 5, 7-9 pm, Clementine Café
Andrew Connell, <i>Friday Forum</i>	Fri., Nov 8, @ 3:30 pm, Music Building 142
JMU Opera Theater: Faust	Fri., Nov 8, @ 8 pm, Mainstage Theatre*
JMU Opera Theater: Faust	Sat., Nov 9, @ 8 pm, Mainstage Theatre*
JMU Opera Theater: Faust	Sun., Nov 10, @ 2 pm, Mainstage Theatre*
JMU Guitar Ensemble	Mon, Nov 11, @ 7 pm, Anthony-Seeger Auditorium*
String Chamber Ensembles One	Tues., Nov 12 @ 8 pm, Anthony-Seeger Auditorium*
JMU Jazz Combos	Tues., Nov 12 and 19, 7-9 pm, Clementine Café

*These concerts provide student credit for MUS 195.

For tickets and further information, visit www.jmuforbescenter.com or call the Forbes Center Box Office at (540) 568-7000. For more on the School of Music, go to www.jmu.edu/music or call (540) 568-6714.

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