

Percy Aldridge Grainger (1882–1961) ***Lincolnshire Posy***

Grainger was born in Melbourne, Australia and was schooled mostly under the auspices of his mother. By the age of 13, he had made his debut as a solo pianist and was soon moving to Frankfurt to study at the Hoch Conservatory. Following his education in Germany, he moved to London with his mother and slowly established himself as an international concert pianist. However talented he was at the piano, he always had a yearning to compose. It was during this period that Grainger toured the English countryside collecting folk songs straight from the source: often working-class, common folk. Grainger's interest in this collecting was not of merely arranging these songs into neat compositions, but rather to emphasize the way the singer presented the songs, with the resulting rhythms, inflections, and ornaments.

The wind ensemble masterwork *Lincolnshire Posy* is Grainger's settings of five folk songs he collected from the area of Lincolnshire from 1905–06. (The sixth and last movement, *The Lost Lady Found*, was collected by his friend, Lucy E. Broadwood.) Written upon the request of the fledgling American Bandmasters Association in 1937, this monumental work was composed straight to the instrumental parts, without a score! Perhaps this is why the first edition is fraught with mistakes, leading legendary wind band conductor Frederick Fennell to publish a full-score, corrected edition in 1987. The premiere was on March 7, 1937 by a professional band hired by Grainger. Due to the difficulty of the music, the performance only included 3 of the 6 movements. Six months later, the Goldman Band performed all 6 movements for the first time.

I. Lisbon

Originally entitled *Dublin Bay*, the first movement of *Lincolnshire Posy* is the shortest—a brisk, simple, lilted melody in 6/8 time. The main theme of the movement is presented first in the muted trumpets and bassoon, and is set against a war-like motif in the horns. Like the fourth movement, this movement ends in a serene, suspended pianissimo that contrasts the general tone of the movement as a whole.

II. Horkstow Grange

The second movement presents a slow, legato, repeating, re-harmonizing motif. Shifting mostly between 4/4 and 5/4 time, the song features a trumpet solo.

III. Rufford Park Poachers

Rufford Park Poachers opens by presenting an asymmetrical melody between B-flat clarinet and piccolo followed two eighth notes later by E-flat clarinet and bass clarinet. This movement is noted as having difficult counterpoint, unusual rhythms and odd time signatures that shift rapidly. Grainger wrote two versions: one with a flugelhorn as soloist and one with a soprano saxophone as soloist. For this afternoon's performance, the flugelhorn will be used.

IV. The Brisk Young Sailor

The movement starts with a simple, jaunty tune meant to evoke the image of a strapping young lad striding up the road to meet his sweetheart. It is in the key of B-flat major. It begins with a clarinet choir playing the simple melody. The melody is then expanded upon by the entire band in several ways. One notable occurrence of this is when a solo baritone horn is given the melody while the first clarinets, E-flat clarinet, flutes and piccolos play a rapid sextuplet pattern and arpeggios before it resolves into a fugue-like reiteration of the melody through a solo soprano saxophone and oboe.

V. Lord Melbourne

A fierce and heavy war song opens in free time, where each note is conducted out

of time, which is followed by a lyrical trumpet solo. As the movement progresses, it slides rapidly into different time signatures including unusual times such as "2.5/4" and "1.5/4" as well as in and out of "free time" as the war song is restated.

VI. *The Lost Lady Found*

This movement opens with a quick, jumpy, straight 3/4 melody that is typically conducted in 1. This setting features a constantly repeating motif interrupted by one short "bridge" section, which leads to the final presentation of the motif returning under a counter melody enhanced by a large complement of melodic percussion.

James Kessler (b. 1947)

Hudson River Rhapsody

James Kessler, a graduate of the Eastman School of Music, served for over twenty years on the arranging staff of the U.S. Army Band in Washington, D.C. His writing includes music for National Geographic, Kennedy Center Honors, numerous PBS specials, and a host of performances involving the National Symphony Orchestra.

Hudson River Rhapsody, for solo oboe and band, was the first in a series of works written for the West Point Military Academy Band to celebrate the bicentennial of the Military Academy. Like the Hudson River School paintings of Thomas Cole and Thomas Benjamin Pope, the rhapsody is really a bit of nostalgia, a remembrance influenced by the pastoral beauty and history that surround West Point and the Hudson River Valley. For over two hundred years, people have traveled from near and far to enjoy the quiet and tranquil peace of the Valley - to relax and perhaps meditate for just a moment on America's hard-won freedom. *Hudson River Rhapsody* is a modern day ballad, a reflective and melancholy camp song - the sort of music that has long been part of army life.

[Note from the recording by the West Point Band **West Point Military Academy, 200 years of Excellence**]

Frank Ticheli (b. 1958)

Blue Shades

Frank Ticheli is Professor of Composition at the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music. He has written for orchestra, chamber ensemble, and choir, but he is perhaps best known for his more than twenty pieces for concert band, including *Cajun Folk Songs* and *Postcard*.

Regarding the composition of *Blue Shades*, Ticheli writes:

As its title suggests, the work alludes to the Blues, and a jazz feeling is prevalent—however, it is in not literally a Blues piece . . . [it] is heavily influenced by the Blues: "Blue notes" (flatted 3rds, 5ths, and 7ths) are used constantly; Blues harmonies, rhythms, and melodic idioms pervade the work; and many "shades of blue" are depicted, from bright blue, to dark, to dirty, to hot blue.

At times, *Blue Shades* burlesques some of the clichés from the Big Band era, not as a mockery of those conventions, but as a tribute. A slow and quiet middle section recalls the atmosphere of a dark, smoky blues haunt. An extended clarinet solo played near the end recalls Benny Goodman's hot playing style and ushers in a series of "wailing" brass chords recalling the

train whistle effects commonly used during that era. Blue Shades was commissioned by a consortium of thirty university, community, and high school concert bands under the sponsorship of the Worldwide Concurrent Premieres and Commissioning Fund. Included in that consortium among many of the nation's finest university wind ensembles were the Lexington High School and Lincoln-Sudbury High School Symphonic Bands.

[Note by Peter Norman]

Paul Hindemith (1895–1963)

Marsch from Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes by Carl Maria von Weber (arr. Keith Wilson)

Paul Hindemith was not only a prolific composer, but also an accomplished violinist and violist, conductor, and pedagogue. A testament to his passion for education is the fact that Hindemith learned to play nearly every symphonic instrument and subsequently composed a sonata for each.

Hindemith was born just outside of Frankfurt, Germany and began violin lessons at age 9. After his father was killed in World War I, he took a job with the Frankfurt Opera orchestra to support his family. His first compositions were operas written in an experimental vein, though as he became more interested in composing music for students and amateurs, his works became more tonal with simpler, more traditional forms. Although Hindemith was never forced to leave Germany with the rise of the Nazi regime, he immigrated to the United States in 1940 due to his music being all but banned in Hitler's Germany and to his wife Gertrud's Jewish heritage. Soon after arriving in the United States, Hindemith became the head of the School of Music at Yale University.

The *Symphonic Metamorphosis* was originally fashioned as a ballet based on the music of Carl Maria von Weber, the great German Romantic composer. The ballet project was abandoned, but the musical ideas survived, and the work was completed in 1943 for symphony orchestra. Hindemith always believed the piece should be available for concert band, and he asked his Yale colleague Keith Wilson to do the transcription. The *Marsch* is the fourth and final movement of the larger work, and the music is based on a piano duet by Weber. The opening brass statement can be heard throughout the movement, which progresses from a dark, almost sinister melody in the oboe and bass clarinet to the unabashed heroism and jubilation of the final measures.

[Note by Peter Norman]

Jules Massenet (1842-1912)

Ballet Music from "Les Cid": Castillane (arr. V. Reynolds)

Jules Émile Frédéric Massenet was a French composer, best known for his over 25 extant operas. Though the operas were very popular during his life, *Manon* leads a very small number of Massenet operas still being staged.

As was popular with French operas at the time, Massenet inserted ballet interludes in the middle of his operas. For his 1885 opera *Le Cid*, the interlude was made up of seven provincial dances, of which we will perform *Castillane*, which refers to the Castille region of Spain.

Castillane is a whirling, spirited waltz, urged ever faster by insistent castanets. Toward the moment of culmination, there is a brief, reflective pause as first the oboes and then the flutes quietly recapitulate the main theme; but then the triangle and tambourine join with the castanets to carry the music to faster and faster bursts of frenetic speed, until the whirling skirts and rapidly stamping boots of imaginary dancers almost become visible on the stage.

Eric Whitacre (b. 1970) **October**

Eric Whitacre is quickly becoming a household name, if not for his beautifully-crafted music, then for his pioneering use of social media to bring people from over fifty countries together to sing in the project known as the Virtual Choir. The concept started when Whitacre recorded a video of himself conducting his piece *Lux Aurumque* and solicited video submissions of people singing along to it. The videos were edited and compiled together to create the Virtual Choir 1.0. A broader effort to recruit more participants from more countries resulted in the release last spring of the Virtual Choir 2.0. Presently, Eric is compiling *Virtual Choir 3.0: Water Night* for its planned release this spring. All Virtual Choir videos are easily found on YouTube.

Eric Whitacre received his Master's degree from the Julliard School in New York City and studied composition with Pulitzer Prize and Oscar-winning composer, John Corigliano. Much of Whitacre's success has been from the attention given to his stirring choral music, but the composer has also written exciting original music for winds. The Metropolitan Wind Symphony has performed several of Whitacre's works, including *Ghost Train Trilogy* at last year's Winter Concert.

October was written at the request of a consortium of thirty high schools from Nebraska who wanted an intermediate-level work. The composer writes:

October is my favorite month. Something about the crisp autumn air and the subtle change in light always makes me a little sentimental, and as I started to sketch I felt that same quiet beauty in the writing. The simple, pastoral melodies and subsequent harmonies are inspired by the great English Romantics (Vaughn Williams, Elgar) as I felt that this style was also perfectly suited to capture the natural and pastoral soul of the season.

George Gershwin (1898-1937) ***An American in Paris*** (arr. Mari van Gils)

George Gershwin was born Jacob Gershowitz in Brooklyn, New York to Russian Jewish immigrant parents. George created most of his works with his lyricist brother Ira Gershwin. Gershwin composed both for Broadway and for the classical concert hall. He also wrote popular songs with success; his first nationally known song was *Swanee*. Many of his compositions have been used in cinema, and many are famous jazz standards. Songbooks have been recorded by Ella Fitzgerald (memorable 3 discs recording for Verve, with Nelson Riddle's orchestra), Herbie Hancock, and several other notable musicians.

After the stunning successes of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924) and the *Piano Concerto in F* (1925), Walter Damrosch, then conductor of the New York Philharmonic, was anxious

to capitalize on the young composer's growing fame. He requested a work from Gershwin for a first performance in Carnegie Hall in mid-December of 1928. Gershwin had journeyed to Paris and was thoroughly immersed in the mood of the French capital. He brought back authentic Parisian taxi horns, which were eventually used as an integral part of this work.

The piece is a tone poem, inspired by extra-musical considerations—the sights, sounds, and moods of Paris. Deems Taylor, the 1920s composer and critic, furnished a blow-by-blow program for the piece from which is a brief excerpt: "You are to imagine an American visiting Paris, swinging down the Champs-Élysées on a mild sunny morning in May or June....Our American's ears being open as well as his eyes, he notes with pleasure the sounds of the city. French taxicabs seem to amuse him particularly."

Regarding this afternoon's performance, conductor Lewis Buckley comments:

What makes this arrangement special is that it is a true (and very well-scored) transcription of the entire Gershwin masterwork. The version heretofore available to most bands is the well-known John Krance arrangement that, while certainly up to Krance's usual standard of excellence, is a much-shortened rendering of the original piece. Although I always enjoyed conducting the Krance, this wonderful transcription by Mari Van Gils is a more artistically rewarding work, one that both our remarkable musicians and our knowledgeable audience will appreciate and enjoy.

[Notes by Gregory C. Depp]