

University of Washington
THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

C67
1995
4-24

presents the



School

of

Music

University

of

Washington

CONTEMPORARY GROUP

Stuart Dempster and William O. Smith,
Co-Directors

8:00 PM
April 24, 1995
Meany Theater

#DAT | #CASS
12.577 | 12.578

PROGRAM

ID2 ^{DAT} WINGS FOR SOLO ALTO SAXOPHONE (1991) (8'58) Joan Tower
transcribed by the composer from
WINGS FOR CLARINET (1981)

Fred Winkler

ID3 FANTASIE, Op. 47, for Violin and Piano (1949) (10'25) Arnold Schönberg
(1874-1951)

Jonathan Graber, *violin*; Joseph Adam*, *piano*

ID4 PINES SONGS (1984) (14'45) Daniel Asia
WHITE PILLARS (b. 1953)
I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND
A LITTLE GIRL
DEAR FRANK
I WALK OUT TO THE END

Carmen Pelton, *soprano*; Craig Sheppard, *piano*;

SONI VENTORUM: Felix Skowronek, *flute*;

Alex Klein, *oboe*; William McColl, *clarinet*;

Arthur Grossman, *bassoon*; David Kappy, *horn*

INTERMISSION

CASS A

ID6 QUARTET for Double Basses (1947) (21'39) Gunther Schuller
(in three movements) (b. 1925)

Ben Musa, Patrick Marckx, Aron Taylor, Steve Shirmer

ID7 CAPRICE for Unicycle Riding Trombonist (1995) (4'11) Stuart Dempster
(or Trombone Playing Unicyclist) (b. 1936)

Nathaniel Irby-Oxford, *performer*

ID8 CONTEMPORARY GROUP IMPROVISATION ENSEMBLE (6'10)
D. J. Ankney, *horn*; Chris Asplund, *piano, violin*
Ed Davis, *viola*; Loren Dempster, *'cello*
Stuart Dempster, *trombone*; Chad Hanson, *piano, voice*
Patrick Roulet, *percussion*

*It is with appreciation that the Contemporary Group acknowledges the guest performance of Joseph Adam, organist at St. James Cathedral.

Wings is, according to the composer, "dedicated to John Sampan, Steve Stusek, and Arno Bornkamp, with thanks for their help and advice in transcribing this piece for saxophone." *Wings* presents an image of the wingspan and flight of a falcon, which sometimes glides almost motionless on the thermal currents and often creates elaborate patterns, looping and diving at tremendous speeds. In *Wings* hushed opening a sustained pitch appears, with not a hint of surging upward thrusts that later dominate. At first the music seems to hover around one pitch, then another, contemplating the quality of each in relation to both what tones precede and follow. As greater motion is generated, new emphases are discovered, each savored in turn. A legato calm follows turbulent arpeggios and trills, gestures from which ascending figures emerge. Rising fourths recur near the end, as if rediscovered. Finally the initial pitch re-emerges, launching the ethereal ascent with which the piece concludes. The winner of several grants and awards, including a coveted Guggenheim Fellowship in 1977, Joan Tower has taught at Bard College and was composer in residence with the St. Louis Symphony. An accomplished pianist she founded and performed for the Da Capo Players, an award winning ensemble specializing in the performance of contemporary music.

[Fred Winkler]

Arnold Schönberg's *Fantasia* ("for Violin with Piano Accompaniment") is his last instrumental work. A major composer of the twentieth century, Schönberg is most renowned for his development of serialism, a compositional procedure in which all twelve pitches of the chromatic scale are given equal prominence. Schönberg most often arranged these pitches in a sequence, or "tone row", which can appear in a given composition in various guises: original, inversion, retrograde, or retrograde inversion. A row can appear melodically, harmonically, or be more deeply embedded in the musical texture. Schönberg completed the violin part of *Fantasia* in its entirety before he composed the piano part. One hears throughout the work a primary melody in the violin part, for in this part the row appears in various forms, both in rhythmic augmentation and diminution. Schönberg's choice of title thus refers, rather than to a taut serial structure, to a larger formal design: an extended introduction, four central sections of strongly contrasting character, and a short recapitulation reminiscent of the introduction.

[Jonathan Graber]

Pines Songs is a cycle of five poems and two fantasy interludes. This version is based on the piano and voice piece of the same title, however the interludes were written specially for this version; it was commissioned by the Oberlin Woodwind quintet, in honor of the sesquicentennial celebration of Oberlin College.

The texts are by writer/poet Paul Pines. He and I first met at the MacDowell Colony, an artists' retreat in Peterborough, New Hampshire. We became close friends, partly as the result of a shared ferocity brought to the game of table tennis. I requested books of poetry. I have so far written four works based on his writings. The poems seem to bring together very disparate worlds, uniting a wealth of emotional perspectives. The imagery ranges from Ecclesiastics to the Blues, stating something universal that is culled from the simple and mundane. At the core of the work is man's uneasy place in the universe; that of a curious bystander to his own inner world, living in a physical world he also hardly understands. How these interior and exterior worlds meet in and interact is the enigma at the center of these poems. However, it is an enigma that is often imbued with a wry and delicate sense of humor.

DAZ 1 / AESS

Like Pines' poetry, the music is of a somewhat eclectic nature. Its language is that of a broadly extended tonality, that allows for the most simple, as well as the most complex sonorities. The result is a rather personal expression of post-serial impressionism, but whose rhythmic sense is, I think, purely American. The piano sonorities of the earlier version have been broadened, enriched, and "colored." The vocal line is alternately declamatory or freely melismatic, with accents often being placed like in popular music. The fantasy interludes freely develop both materials that have already been heard, as well as materials that appear only in later songs, thus leaving a somewhat mystifying impression, that is only resolved at the conclusion of the cycle. *[Dan Asia, ca. 1988]*

WHITE PILLARS

White pillars
White floors
and on a white wall in front of me
the clock has a picture of
Sir Walter Raleigh
on it...

the hour
is half-past his face
I'm at the counter
perusing a menu
I can't read.
By the time I put it down
the blind man next to me
has cut his pancakes
into perfect squares

I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND

I'll never understand
the Universe as music

planets and glands
like notes on
a diatonic scale

the sound of wind
through leaves
tumors in my bloodline

what Pythagoras
listened for until
he found
the perfect ratio...

all those years
without
so much as a whisper

A LITTLE GIRL

A little girl
in a red dress
falls down
in dandelions
laughing at
her own clumsiness...

at first
I think her an image
among images, then
see she's the whole poem.

DEAR FRANK

did I ever tell you
about my discovery?
the Milky Way
is a restaurant full of Mexicans!

I WALK OUT TO THE END

I walk out to the end
of a spit
strewn with broken shells
gulls have dropped
to find the meat:

fisherman are coming back
with their rakes and traps in a woke
of broken cloud...

I become
involved
in the dream of their quiescence.

In a movie I smell salt on the coat
of the man in front of me:
he must be a fisherman.

On my way to work I stop;
how strange to smell the sea
on Lower Broadway.

Daniel Asia, Meet the Composer/Composer in Residence with the Phoenix Symphony, 1991-1994, was born in Seattle in 1953. He has been the recipient of the most competitive grants and fellowships in music, including a Meet the Composer/Reader's Digest Consortium Commission, United Kingdom Fulbright Arts Award Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, four NEA Composers Grants, an M. B. Rockefeller Grant, McDowell Colony and Tanglewood Fellowships, ASCAP and BMI composition prizes, and a DAAD Fellowship for study in the Federal Republic of Germany. He is presently Associate Professor of Composition and head of the Composition Department at The University of Arizona, Tucson.

Paul Pines spent the Sixties in Vietnam, Europe, Mexico, Belize and New York City's Lower East Side. During the Seventies, he ran the Tin Palace, a Bowery jazz club. His novel, *The Tin Angel*, was published by William Morrow in 1983. *Onion*, his first book of poems, was published by Mulch Press in 1971, and Contact II Publications brought out his second, *Hotel Madden Poems*, in November 1991.

The Quartet for Doublebasses was composed in 1947, with some revisions in the last movement written in 1959. When presented to a well-known bass teacher and 'virtuoso' in 1948, it was declared unplayable. Many years later, Fred Zimmerman and a group of dedicated young bass players subsequently gave the first performance of the work under his direction in Carnegie Recital Hall in the spring of 1960. It has since been widely performed all over the world.

The Quartet is nothing more than an attempt to write a non-compromising serious piece for four basses, just as one might normally write a string quartet. It is far removed from the genre and character pieces that have weighted down bass repertory for decades.

The work is in three movements. The first, largely homophonic in concept, groups the four basses into various combinations (two pairs, one player accompanied by the other three, etc.). It may be of interest that the initial high register opening chord, played tremolo, is identical to the last sounds in the fourth movement of Schoenberg's opus 16, *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, and in a sense the entire bass quartet was inspired by and evolved from that single chord, which seemed to be in 1947 (and still does) such an extraordinarily daring instrumental conception for the time when Schoenberg's work was written.

The second movement is a scherzo, complete with a trio. The third movement is an Adagio, including a cadenza-like section featuring the first bass in the high register, a jazz pizzicato section, and fade away Coda.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of the quartet and its only truly innovational contribution is the special tuning of the basses in the second and third movements. Each instrument has a different tuning, thus enabling the work to avoid the endless quartet harmonies and double-stops limited to fourth and fifths that are characteristic of so much bass literature. Perhaps the most striking example of the possibilities permitted by such of the strings is the eight-part chord in harmonics in the third movement, a chord literally not possible in harmonics with the conventional tuning.

[*Gunther Schuller*]

It has been my dream for several years to have trombone played while riding unicycle. *Caprice* at last realizes this wish. While trying to learn unicycle myself I discovered muscles I never knew existed. Rather than teach trombonists to ride unicycle it seemed that it might be easier to teach unicyclists to play trombone, and

I began to make plans for such activity about a year ago. Imagine my surprise and pleasure when one of my trombone students let it be known that he rides a unicycle. Nathaniel Irby-Oxford has contributed greatly to the compositional activity surrounding *Caprice* and I am indebted to him and thankful for his participation. The reason for my interest in this activity had to do with a performance of Jan Bark's and Folke Rabe's *Pavanne* by the Kulturquartette, four Swedish trombonists specializing in new performance. The change in sound direction with trombone is pronounced because the instrument is so directional. I imagined then (1968) what it would be like for such directional changes to take place on unicycles. At last, with *Caprice* there is a prototype. [Stuart Dempster]

Improvisation has been a regular component of Contemporary Group activities for over 20 years. In some respects improvisation is speeded up composition. By the same token composition is slowed down improvisation. Think of improvisation as composition in real time. With any improvisation group that I teach, emphasis is on listening and developing listening skills. Through listening, decisions are made with regard to what to play--and when. [Stuart Dempster]

1994-95 UPCOMING EVENTS

To request disability accommodations, contact the Office of the ADA Coordinator at least ten days in advance of the event. 543-6450 (voice); 543-6452 (TDD); 685-3885 (FAX); access@u.washington.edu (E-mail).

April 26, Roberta Brockman, hand surgeon. A presentation of *Hand Injuries and Musicians*. 5 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

April 28, Jazz Artists Series. 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

April 29, Guitar Ensemble. 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

~~May 1, University Symphony, featuring student conductors. 8 PM, Meany Theater. CANCELLED~~

May 1, Faculty Recital: Craig Sheppard, piano. 8 PM, Meany Theater

May 2, Electro-Acoustic Music Festival. 8 PM, Meany Theater.

May 10, Vocal Jazz Ensemble. 7 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

May 11, Keyboard Debut Series. 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

May 12, Littlefield Organ Series: *The Baroque Concerto* with Carole Terry and Friends. 12:30 PM, Walker-Ames Room, Kane Hall.

May 13, Littlefield Organ Series: *The Baroque Concerto* with Carole Terry and Friends. 8 PM, Walker-Ames Room, Kane Hall.

May 14, Music of Nigeria with Yoruba musician, Chief I. K. Dairo, Visiting Artist in Ethnomusicology. 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

May 16, 17, 19, and 20, UW Opera: WEST SIDE STORY. 8 PM, Meany Theater.

May 21, UW Opera: WEST SIDE STORY. 3 PM, Meany Theater.

May 21, Oboe Extravaganza with faculty artist Alex Klein and his students. 7 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

May 22, Student Chamber Music Concert. 8 PM, Brechemin Auditorium.

May 23, University Singers. 8 PM, Meany Theater.

May 24, Wind Ensemble and Symphonic Band, with faculty guest artist Michael Brockman, saxophone. 8 PM, Meany Theater.