Performance UGA
30 April 2016

The Hodgson Wind Ensemble
Tuesday
April 19 2016
8:00 p.m.
HODGSON CONCERT HALL

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)
Oiseaux Exotiques (1956)

Olivier Messiaen was a French composer, organist, and ornithologist. He studied at the Paris Conservatory with Paul Dukas and Marcel Dupré. Eventually, Messiaen served on the faculty at the Conservatory, first as a professor of harmony and then as a professor of composition. He held these positions for more than 35 years until his retirement in 1978. His many distinguished pupils include Pierre Boulez (who died just recently on January 5, 2016), Yvonne Loriod (who later became Messiaen’s second wife), Karlheinz Stockhausen, Iannis Xenakis, and George Benjamin.

Messiaen’s relationship with music and sound was deeply affected by a sensory condition known as synesthesia, which, in his case, caused him to perceive specific colors when he heard certain harmonies. He built his own harmonies based on the colors he “heard” and used combinations of them in most of his compositions. His music is often rhythmically complex, drawing from various cultures around the globe, and it is harmonically and melodically based on “modes of limited transposition,” which were Messiaen’s own innovation. Many of his compositions depict what he termed “the marvellous aspects of the faith,” drawing on his unshakeable Roman Catholicism. He traveled widely, and wrote music inspired by such diverse influences as Indonesian gamelan music, the landscape of Bryce Canyon in Utah, and the work of St. Francis of Assisi.

Throughout his life, Messiaen was fascinated by birdsong. From early childhood, he was attracted to the twittering language of birds, and as an adult came to believe that it was much more than mere communication; it was music. No other composer (in fact no other ornithologist) was ever so completely dedicated to the painstaking transcription, study, and musical application of birdsong.

An early manifestation of Messiaen’s style oiseaux appeared in the famous Quartet for the End of Time, composed during his internment at the Görlitz prison camp during World War II. In 1953, Messiaen shifted his compositional focus almost entirely to birdsong, first producing Reveal des oiseaux (The Birds Awake) for piano and orchestra, containing songs from an impressive 38 species. Oiseaux exotiques, written three years later, features a more strident ensemble of woodwinds, brass, and percussion – with the piano acting as a soloist in what Messiaen describes as “almost a piano concerto.” Where Reveal incorporates songs one might hear between midnight and noon in the European Jura mountain range, Oiseaux exotiques features forty-seven species from India, China, Malaysia, and the Americas – a collection that Messiaen acknowledged could never exist together in nature.

Oiseaux is roughly divided into nine sections. Some are lengthy medleys of tightly intertwined songs for the entire ensemble. Some are brief interludes showcasing individual birds in smaller instrumental combinations. Interspersed among them are several virtuosic piano cadenzas.

The work opens with a pair of shrieks from the Indian minah bird, followed by its full song in extreme slow motion. Note the long sequence of repeated notes at the end of this first melody. It will return in the piece’s dramatic final moments. A long tam-tam crescendo is a prelude to the song of the prairie chicken, whose nasal character is scored for clarinet and oboe in its lower registers. The long medley at the work’s center is introduced by the percussion (snare drum and woodblock) featuring rhythms derived from Hindu and Greek music – the only “unfeathered” music in the piece. The final piano cadenza treats the songs of two North American species, the bobolink and the catbird (with its characteristic “maeow”), as a kind of two-part invention.

Program Notes

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### Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

**Serenade for Winds in D Minor, Op. 44 (1878)**

We have Johannes Brahms to thank for essentially launching Dvořák's career. In 1878, Brahms was a judge in a composition contest that awarded Dvořák honor as a contestant. Brahms then continued to champion the young Czech composer and helped land his first publishing contract. The contract asked of Dvořák a symphony, which we know now as No. 5, as well as some other works, including the delightful Serenade for Winds (and strings).

The Serenade offers us Dvořák in youthful invention, as well as at his best in beautiful melodies and luscious harmony. That he chose to write this work for the winds that he did (two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, contrabassoon, and three horns) together with cello and bass, while omitting the flute, reveals the intention and fabric of the Serenade: darkly rich sonorities, chocolate-like lines, echoing the lovely sere-nades of the Mozart of Old, while creating a uniquely Czech-sounding work. It is indeed exquisitely done, and one of the most glorious chamber-works ever written.

The satirically pompous first movement is at once arresting with its dotted rhythmical patterns and its delightful conjuring of the famous European/Czech village wind bands, or “Harmoniemusik.” Finally, the *Allegro molto* arrives to bring all “round right with a stout rondo and certain glee.” And, for good measure, themes from the first movement are brought back in this finale to give the piece a lasting counterbalance. The overall result is as creative and brow-raisingly clever as Dvořák could be, and immensely fun to hear.

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**Steven Stucky** (1949-2016)

**Threnos** (1998)

In memory of composer Steven Stucky, tonight’s concert opens with *Threnos*, one of his six compositions for wind ensemble.

Steven Stucky is one of America’s most highly regarded and lauded composers. Stucky was the Given Foundation Professor of Composition at Cornell University for more than thirty years and served as artistic director and conductor of Ensemble X, an Ithaca-based professional new music ensemble. Stucky had a long relationship with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic as composer-in-residence. His pre-concert talks to audiences were legendary... full of wit, intellect, and “accessible profundity.” Stucky served as a trustee of the American Academy in Rome, a director of New Music USA, a board member of the Koussovitzky Foundation, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Stucky’s musical output is expansive. He completed commissioned works for national and international orchestras, an oratorio (*August 4, 1964*), an opera (*The Classical Style*), and dozens of works and transcriptions for solo, vocal, chamber, and orchestral mediums. Stucky’s compositions for wind ensemble include concertos for cello, *Voyages*, and percussion, *Hue and Cry*, (co-commissioned by Mark Scatterday and Cynthia Johnston Turner, and performed by the Hodgson Wind Ensemble in 2015), *Fune-ral Music for Queen Mary*, and *Fanfares and Arias*. He won the Pulitzer Prize for his *Second Concerto for Orchestra* in 2005.

**Erik Morales** (Born 1966)

**Concerto for Trumpet in C and Piano** (2006)

Tonight’s concert features the winner of the Hodgson Wind Ensemble Concerto Competition, Michael Meo, as soloist in Erik Morales’s Concerto for Trumpet in C and Piano.

Morales’s compositions are highly varied, and include influences from both his classical and jazz backgrounds. His library features a wide variety of mediums, including more than two dozen works for the trumpet. These works include transcriptions of canonical compositions (e.g. “Mars” and “Jupiter” from *The Planets*), arrangements of spirituals and hymns, and original works for both solo trumpet and trumpet ensemble.

Tonight’s performance marks the tenth anniversary of Morales’s *Concerto for Trumpet in C* and Piano. Regarding the duality of soloists, Morales writes:

> This concerto was conceived as a showcase for both instruments, trumpet and piano. At the time I was composing this work, I was determined to have the piano play an equal role to the trumpet and not take the accompanying role which is all too prevalent in the current repertoire.

Besides challenging the traditional label of “double concerto,” Morales avoids labeling the work as strictly a classical or jazz composition, exploiting both genres equally. The first and second movement both open with improvisatory piano fantasies before introducing accompanying ostinatos and other classical idioms. The second movement makes uses of Romantic compositional techniques, including both common tone modulations and tonic substitutions for harmonic fluidity.

Morales’s wind ensemble accompaniment was completed in 2007, and the Hodgson Wind Ensemble is the eighth wind band to perform this concerto.

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**Bruce Broughton** (Born 1945)

**A Celebration Overture** (2014)

Bruce Broughton is best known for his many film scores, including *Silverado, The Rescuers Down Under, Miracle on 34th Street, Homeward Bound, and Harry and the Hendersons,* and his television themes for *JAG, Tiny Toon Adventures,* and *Dinosaurs,* among many others. With twenty-four nominations, he has won a record ten Emmy awards. His music has accompanied many Disney theme park attractions throughout the world, and his 1998 score for *Heart of Darkness* was the first recorded orchestral score for a video game.

Broughton’s works for wind ensemble, band, orchestra, and chamber ensemble have been performed and recorded throughout the world. He is a board member of ASCAP, a former governor of both the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and a past president and founding member of The Society of Composers and Lyricists.
Broughton is an adjunct professor in Scoring for Motion Pictures and Television at the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California and a lecturer in music composition at the University of California-Los Angeles Herb Alpert School of Music.

Celebration is an extended fanfare, opening with an energetic brass and percussion motif that forms the basis of most of the piece that follows. A contrasting lyrical section appears shortly after the opening statement and once again before the final push to the end. The overall feeling of the piece is exuberant and cheerfully festive. The piece was composed in 2014 for Thomas G. Leslie and the University of Nevada Las Vegas Wind Ensemble.

– Program Note by Matthew Sadowksi

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