

CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
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PRESENT

UM Wind Orchestra

*AMERICAN MASTERS:
THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED*

MICHAEL VOTTA JR., MUSIC DIRECTOR
CHRIS GEKKER, TRUMPET

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2009 • 8PM
ELSIE & MARVIN DEKELBOUM CONCERT HALL

MICHAEL VOTTA JR. BY MIKE CIESIELSKI

UM Wind Orchestra

AMERICAN MASTERS: THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

UM Wind Orchestra
 Michael Votta Jr., Music Director
 Chris Gekker, Trumpet

NED ROREM

Sinfonia (1957)

Like a motor
 Slow
 Lento
 Scherzando

ALAN HOVHANESS

Return and Rebuild the Desolate Places, Op. 213 (1965)

Andante
 Adagio

JENNIFER HIGDON

Fanfare Ritmico (2000)

INTERMISSION

DAVID MASLANKA

A Child's Garden of Dreams (1982)

There is a desert on the moon where the dreamer sinks so deeply into the ground that she reaches hell.

A Drunken woman falls into the water and comes out renewed and sober.

A horde of small animals frightens the dreamer. The animals increase to a tremendous size, and one of them devours the little girl.

A drop of water is seen as it appears when looked at through a microscope.

The girl sees that the drop is full of tree branches. This portrays the origin of the world.

An ascent into heaven, where pagan dances are being celebrated; and a descent into hell, where angels are doing good deeds

Join us for a post-performance Meet and Greet with the artists.

NED ROREM

Sinfonia

“Anyone can be drunk, anyone can be in love, anyone can waste time and weep, but only I can pen my songs in the remaining years or minutes,” wrote Ned Rorem. Known both as a writer and a composer, Rorem is intriguing as both a musical figure and as a personality. He is self-described as a profoundly diatonic composer and his music language betrays the influence of his French impressionist idols Debussy and Ravel. Rorem’s harmonic palette is generally characterized by vertical extrapolations — through modality, polymodality, and chordal alterations — of an essentially tonal framework. Some works conduct innovative experiments in the song cycle form; *Poems of Love and Rain*, for example, sets eight different poems to music, then sets them again in reverse order to contrasting music. Many of his works juxtapose passages of harmonic and rhythmic complexity with moments of elegance and repose.

By the age of 16, Rorem had graduated from high school and already performed a concerto with the American Concerto Orchestra. He studied music theory with Leo Sowerby at the American Conservatory for a brief period before entering Northwestern University, where his time was largely spent absorbing a piano repertoire. In 1943, he accepted a scholarship from the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, where he would study counterpoint with Rosario Scalero and musical-dramatic forms with Gian Carlo Menotti. After only a year there, Rorem moved to New York City, where he worked as Virgil Thomson’s copyist in exchange for \$20 a week plus composition lessons. Rorem also worked as rehearsal accompanist for Martha Graham and Eva Gauthier. Eventually Rorem entered Juilliard, where he completed Bachelor’s (1946) and Master’s (1948) degrees. He also studied with Aaron Copland during two summers at Tanglewood.

An award allowed Rorem to travel to France. What was intended to be a three-month visit ended up lasting 12 years. Rorem returned to New York in 1958 and during the next few decades held teaching positions at the University of Buffalo (1959–1960), the University of Utah (1965–1966), and the Curtis Institute (1980–1986). He still remained more of a composer than pedagogue, and is widely revered as the modern master of the art song genre. He received a Pulitzer Prize in 1976 for *Air Music*, two Guggenheim Fellowships and commissions from several major symphony orchestras.

Rorem’s *Sinfonia* was written in 1957 as the first commission for the American Wind Symphony Orchestra and its conductor, Robert Boudreau. It is cast in four brief sections, two of which are lyrical and reflective, and two of which are full of energy. The work is short, but possesses both wit and charm.



ALAN HOVHANESS

Return and Rebuild the Desolate Places, Op. 213

Much has been rightly made of the mixed heritage of Alan Hovhaness, who began life as Alan Hovhaness Chakmakjian. Born in 1911 of an Armenian father and Scottish mother, he found his compelling hybrid compositional style by merging his Eastern and Western roots. He composed early in life, completing two operas by age 13, and having his first symphony performed by the BBC Symphony in 1939.

In 1942, he attended Tanglewood and studied with Copland and Bernstein, who were both critical of his music. Their rejection (coupled with that of others such as Roger Sessions) led him to destroy many of his early works. It also provided the impetus for his study of the music of his native Armenia.

“Armenian music belongs to the ancient world when ragas, melody lines, and talas, rhythmic lines, were main pillars of universal music,” Hovhaness wrote, “When music was melody and rhythm, when each melodic combination was a gift of the gods, each rhythmic combination was a mantram to unlock a key of power in nature, then music was one of the mysteries of the elements, of the planetary systems, of the worlds, visible and invisible. The cycle of Western civilization since the Renaissance has developed outer laws of music and the outer forces of nature. This knowledge is limited. It pierces no veil and brings no well-being to the inner life — it offers no remedy for the disaster of inward disintegration — it leaves the human nucleus unthreaded, uncentered, unrevealed, with no hope of recovering the form or the central sun of existence.

“The laws of raga and tala bring attunement with the inner forces of nature, freedom and from the limitation of consciousness of life and death, indifference to the storm of broken threads. If it be the end of a cycle, it is nothing. There have been and will be far nobler cycles.”

Hovhaness began writing for wind orchestra when commissioned by the American Wind Symphony Orchestra. The first work for winds was his *Symphony No. 4*, and the medium proved amenable to him: six of his symphonies are for wind orchestra.

Return and Rebuild the Desolate Places was also commissioned by the American Wind Symphony Orchestra. It is not a concerto in the usual sense. Rather than a virtuoso showpiece, the solo instrument moves through a “landscape” provided by the orchestra in a way similar to Berlioz’s treatment of the viola in *Harold in Italy*.

Hovhaness wrote:

“1. In the form of a *netori* or short prelude. Through mysterious clusters, the solo trumpet sounds like a prophet of doom. It is the voice of Cassandra. Suddenly terror strikes with fury and devastation, ending with dark glissandi of moaning trombones.”

“2. Inspired by a portrait of the heroic priest, Khrimian Hairig, who led the Armenian people through many persecutions. It is a melismatic hymn of the builders of the temple, who follow the sound of the trumpet, which is the cantor, or inspired messenger. The priest-like melody is in the form of three arcs: 1) The Chalice of Holiness, 2) The Wings of Compassion, 3) The Triumph of Faith. The people emerge from their dark caves rejoicing.” The main melody of this movement was first used in Hovhaness’s *Khrimian Hairig*, a work from the 1940s, and was then recycled during the early 1950s for the incidental music to Clifford Odets’s play, *The Flowering Peach* before its use here.

JENNIFER HIGDON

Fanfare Ritmico

Jennifer Higdon was born on December 31, 1962, in Brooklyn, New York but she grew up mostly in rural east Tennessee, where she spent much of her youth fishing at a local pond (one of her favorite memories is catching 41 bluegills in an afternoon). Teaching herself flute, she played in marching bands and attended band competitions (at one such competition, she was one of 22 people squeezed into a Volkswagen Beetle). At Bowling Green State University in Ohio she found a creative and sympathetic flute teacher, Judith Bentley. “She started me composing,” Higdon recalls, “and was extraordinary in getting me to really think about line in music.”

Having come to composition a little late, Higdon continued with it, earning her graduate degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, studying with, among others, Ned Rorem. She also received an Artist Diploma from The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. She taught at Bard College before joining the faculty at Curtis in 1994. She maintains a secondary career as a conductor, and directed the orchestra and wind ensemble at University of Pennsylvania.

Higdon hears her music as falling into an American school grounded in Copland and Samuel Barber, also influenced by Debussy and Ravel. This is most true of her slow movements, which tend to be tonal and lyrical. Her fast movements, however — of which *Fanfare Ritmico* is a prime example — are very fast, driving, hyperactive, and irregular in rhythm, with a tonal language reminiscent of Bartok, somewhat atonal as to melody but consonant in harmony.

Never systematic in her composing methods, she favors through-composed works, and credits a lifetime of listening to pop music for the accelerated pace of change in her music; her ideas tend to turn over every 10 or 15 seconds. Personal tragedy has played a role too: “I discovered,” she says, “that after my younger brother passed away six years ago, my music went through a period of trying to decide (as I think I was) whether it (and life) would be about living or about dying. And the decision was to go on the living track. So I think my music tends to be on the ‘brighter’ side.”

Kyle Gann writes: “*Fanfare Ritmico* is a percussion-driven tour-de-force of perpetual motion, a kind of miniature *Rite of Spring*, but its violence almost sets you



up to miss the fact that its best effects are delicate and ethereal. The piece requires four percussionists playing 26 percussion instruments, plus a timpanist, and they play on almost every page. Much of the piece is in a kind of Morse-code style of irregular repeated notes, with lightning-quick runs in the woodwinds on a scale that classical musicians call “octatonic” and pop musicians “diminished.” The piece is written in a series of waves, as each gradually built-up orchestral climax cuts off to reveal some delicate soloistic work. The final crescendo is a Rite of Spring-like extravaganza of different rhythmic layers superimposed on each other.”

DAVID MASLANKA

A Child's Garden of Dreams

David Maslanka was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 1943. He studied at the New England Conservatory, the Oberlin Conservatory, the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, and received a PhD in music theory and composition from Michigan State University. His principal composition teachers were Joseph Wood and H. Owen Reed. He has served on the faculties of the State University College in Geneseo, New York, Sarah Lawrence College, New York University and Kingsborough Community College of the City University of New York.

He has received grants and fellowships from ASCAP, the MacDowell Colony, the New York State Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts among many others. His music has been widely performed in the United States, and in Canada, Europe, Australia and Japan. His works for band and wind ensemble include *Concerto for Piano, Winds and Percussion*, *A Child's Garden of Dreams*, *Symphony No. 2*, *In Memoriam*, *Golden Light*, *Concerto for Marimba and Band* and *Concerto for Wind Ensemble*. His publishers are Carl Fischer, Inc., Kjos Music Co. and Marimba Productions, Inc.

A Child's Garden of Dreams was commissioned by John and Marietta Paynter for the Northwestern University Symphonic Wind Ensemble. It was composed in the summer of 1981 and premiered by Northwestern in 1982. Maslanka writes:

“The following is from *Man and His Symbols* by Carl Jung:

“A very important case came to me from a man who was himself a psychiatrist. One day he brought me a handwritten booklet he had received as a Christmas present from his 10-year-old daughter. It contained a whole series of dreams she had had when she was 8. They made up the weirdest series of dreams I have ever seen, and I could well understand why her father was more than just puzzled by them. Though childlike, they were uncanny, and they contained images whose origin was wholly incomprehensible to the father... In the unabridged German original, each dream begins with the words of the old fairy tale: ‘Once upon a time...’ By these words the little dreamer suggests that she feels as if each dream were a sort of fairy tale, which she wants to tell her father as a Christmas present. The father tried to explain the dreams in terms of their context. But he could not do so because there

appeared to be no personal associations to them... The little girl died of an infectious disease about a year after that Christmas... The dreams were a preparation for death, expressed through short stories, like the tales told at primitive initiations... The little girl was approaching puberty, and at the same time, the end of her life. Little or nothing in the symbolism of her dreams points to the beginning of a normal adult life. When I first read her dreams, I had the uncanny feeling that they suggested impending disaster. These dreams open up a new and rather terrifying aspect of life and death. One would expect to find such images in an aging person who looks back on life, rather than to be given them by a child. Their atmosphere recalls the old Roman saying, ‘Life is a short dream,’ rather than the joy and exuberance of its springtime. Experience shows that the unknown approach of death casts an ‘adumbratio’ (an anticipatory shadow) over the life and dreams of the victim. Even the alter in Christian churches represents, on one hand, a tomb and, on the other, a place of resurrection — the transformation of death into eternal life.’

“I selected five of the twelve dreams as motifs for the movements of this composition:

“There is a desert on the moon where the dreamer sinks so deeply into the ground that she reaches hell.

“A drunken woman falls into the water and comes out renewed and sober.

“A horde of small animals frightens the dreamer. The animals increase to a tremendous size, and one of them devours the little girl.

“A drop of water is seen as it appears when looked at through a microscope. The girl sees that the drop is full of tree branches. This portrays the origin of the world.

“An ascent into heaven, where pagan dances are being celebrated; and a descent into hell, where angels are doing good deeds.”

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

CHRIS GEKKER is Professor of Trumpet at the University of Maryland School of Music. He has been featured as soloist at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and throughout the United States, Europe and Asia. After performances of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no. 2 and the Christmas Oratorio at Carnegie Hall, the *New York Times* praised his “bright virtuosity” and described his playing as “clear toned and pitch perfect.”

Chris appears as soloist on more than 20 recordings and as a performer on more than one hundred chamber music, orchestra and jazz recordings. *CD Review* called his recording of Copland's *Quiet City* “a model of quiet perfection” and in an overview of several solo recordings *Gramophone Magazine* described his performances as



“astonishingly poised.” Of his recording of Eric Ewazen’s Sonata for Trumpet and Piano, *American Record Guide* states “Ewazen writes that he had Gekker’s sound in his mind when he wrote the Sonata, and I can understand why. It is round, soft edged, and gorgeous at soft dynamic levels, and always full and well controlled at fortissimo.” Chris is one of the featured artists on Deutsche Grammophon’s 2005 compilation *Masters of the Trumpet*.

Chris’s most recent solo recordings include the Bach 2nd Brandenburg Concerto and *Winter*, a CD of music for trumpet and piano by Eric Ewazen and David Snow. Of the Bach, *Classics Today* writes “Chris Gekker plays with brilliance and panache,” and *BBC Magazine* states “the trumpeter gives a secure and glittering account.” On *Winter*, *American Record Guide* writes “I cannot think of another trumpet player I’d rather listen to than Gekker, and he is at his sweet, velvet-toned best in these pieces.”

Chris was a member of the American Brass Quintet for 18 years, and on the faculties of The Juilliard School, the Manhattan School of Music and Columbia University. He was principal trumpet with the Orchestra of St. Luke’s and frequently performed and recorded as principal with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and often as a guest with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He has been a guest principal trumpet with the New York Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, and the Santa Fe Opera. Chris has performed and recorded with many jazz and commercial artists, and often for television and movies.

Many of his former students occupy orchestral positions in major symphonies throughout the world, as well as being prominent in jazz, chamber and commercial music. His *Articulation Studies*, *44 Duos*, *Endurance Drills* and *Piccolo Trumpet Studies* are available from Colin Publications and are sold worldwide. Chris was born in Washington DC, grew up in Alexandria, Virginia, and is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music and the University of Maryland. His teachers include Emerson Head, Sidney Mear, Adel Sanchez and Gerard Schwarz.



MICHAEL VOTTA JR.

MICHAEL VOTTA JR. was Music Director of the North Carolina Wind Orchestra prior to joining the faculty of the University of Maryland in the fall of 2008. Critics have praised him as “a conductor with the drive and ability to fully relay artistic thoughts” and for his “interpretations of definition, precision and most importantly, unmitigated joy.” Ensembles under his direction have received critical acclaim in the United States and Europe for their “exceptional spirit, verve and precision,” their “sterling examples of innovative programming” and “the kind of artistry that is often thought to be the exclusive purview of top symphonic ensembles.” Before his appointment at Maryland, Votta

held conducting positions at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Duke University, Ithaca College, the University of South Florida, Miami University (Ohio) and Hope College.

His performances have been heard in broadcasts throughout the U.S., on Austrian National Radio (ÖRF) and Southwest German Television, and have been released internationally on the Primavera label. In addition, his ensembles have been invited to perform at conferences of the Conductors Guild, the College Band Directors National Association and the North Carolina Music Educators Association. Numerous major composers including George Crumb, Christopher Rouse, Karel Husa, Olly Wilson, Barbara Kolb, Warren Benson and Louis Andriessen have praised his performances of their works.

Votta maintains an active schedule as guest conductor and clinician in the U.S., and has appeared in Europe and Israel. He has taught conducting seminars in the U.S. and Israel, and has guest conducted and lectured at institutions such as the Eastman School of Music, the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, the Prague Conservatory and the National Arts Camp at Interlochen. He has also appeared at conferences of numerous organizations including the College Band Directors National Association, the Midwest Band and Orchestra Conference, the Conductors Guild, and state music educator’s conventions in New York, North Carolina and Ohio.

Votta holds a Doctor of Musical Arts in Conducting degree from the Eastman School of Music where he served as Assistant Conductor of the Eastman Wind Ensemble and studied with Donald Hunsberger. A native of Michigan, Votta received his undergraduate training and Master of Music degrees from the University of Michigan, where he studied with H. Robert Reynolds.

He is the author of numerous articles on wind literature and conducting. His arrangements and editions for winds have been performed and recorded by university and professional wind ensembles in the U.S., Europe and Japan. He has served as Editor of the *College Band Directors National Association Journal*, as a member of the Executive Board of the International Society for the Investigation of Wind Music (IGEB) and on the board of the Conductors Guild.

As a clarinetist, Votta has performed as a soloist throughout the U.S. and Europe. His solo and chamber music recordings are available on the Partridge and Albany labels.

ORCHESTRA MEMBERS



The UM Wind Orchestra uses rotating seating; the players are therefore listed alphabetically

FLUTES

Michelle Lacey
Samantha Prezioso
Amanda Rodriguez
Nicholas Snodgren
Tina Termini

OBOES

Glenda Bates
Miriam Friedman
Jason Williams

CLARINET

Amber Abbott
Samantha Angelo
Adam Gollob
Mandy Maruchi-Turner
Amanda Weeks

BASSOON

Joy Fraser
Michael Goldman
Tom Schneider

SAXOPHONE

Daniel Bray, bari
Ernesto Elizondo
Adam Stephens, tenor
Nicole Tallon

HORN

Laura Bent
Amy Grossnickle
Lauren McCarth
Peter Morris

TRUMPET

Peter Adam
David Matthews
Travis Pryor
Ross Thompson
Ward Yeager

TROMBONE

John Crotty
Joe Masala
Sasha Witt, bass

TUBA

Peter Begina

PERCUSSION

Robbie Burns
Meagan Gillis
Josh Hickman
Anna Viviano