**THE CRANE WIND ENSEMBLE**

*Program Notes • October 18, 2017*

**Variants on a Medieval Tune**

*Norman Dello Joio*

Born Nicodemo DeGioio in New York City, Norman Dello Joio came from a well-respected musical family. After receiving a scholarship to study composition at Juilliard in 1939, Dello Joio continued his studies with Paul Hindemith in 1941. Hindemith praised the lyrical nature of the young composer’s music and encouraged several other principles that became the foundation of Dello Joio’s style: tonality over atonality, diatonicism over serialism, and composing music that was accessible to a general audience.

Dello Joio earned numerous awards and grants for his compositions, including the 1957 Pulitzer Prize in Music for *Meditations for Ecclesiastes* for string orchestra. In 1963, Paul Bryan, the conductor of the Duke University Band, approached Dello Joio with a commission by the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation to write a work for band. Dello Joio had yet to compose a work for that medium and although initially skeptical, he was encouraged by fellow composers Vincent Persichetti, Paul Creston, and William Schuman who were having great success with their own works for band. *Variants on a Medieval Tune* was premiered later that year, on April 10, 1963, by the Duke University Band under the direction of Paul Bryan.

*Variants on a Mediaeval Tune* is cast in variations form and based on the fourteenth-century hymn “In dulci jubilo” (“Of Sweet Rejoicing.”) The famous melody has been the source of numerous compositions, including those by Buxtehude, Bach, and Liszt and the 1853 English translation, “Good Christian Men Rejoice,” by John Mason Neale has become a mainstay of the Christmas carol repertoire. Throughout each of the five variations, Dello Joio transforms the tune using asymmetric rhythms, inventive counterpoint, colorful orchestrations, and the spontaneity and harmonic language associated with jazz and popular music of the 1920s and 30s.

**Quicksilver**

*Stacy Garrop*

Chicago-based composer Stacy Garrop earned degrees at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (B.M.), University of Chicago (M.A.), and Indiana University-Bloomington (D.M.). Her music is centered on dramatic and lyrical storytelling, believing the sharing of stories is a defining element of our humanity and that we strive to share with others the experiences and concepts that we find compelling. Garrop’s music shares stories by taking audiences on sonic journeys – some simple and beautiful, while others are complicated and dark – depending on the needs and dramatic shape of the story. Garrop is currently serving as composer-in-residence of the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra, sponsored by New Music USA and the League of American Orchestras’ Music Alive 2016-2019 residence program. She has additionally received awards and grants including a Fromm Music Foundation Grant, Raymond and Beverly Sackler Music Composition Prize, and three Barlow Endowment commissions, as well as competitions sponsored by the American Composers Orchestra, Charleston Symphony Orchestra, Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Omaha Symphony, Boston Choral Ensemble, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, and the Utah Arts Festival.

Of *Quicksilver*, Garrop writes:

In addition to being another name for the element mercury, “quicksilver” is used to describe something that changes quickly or is difficult to contain. My concerto of the same name was inspired by the Roman god Mercury, as well as the mercurial nature of the saxophone: unpredictable, very lively, and volatile. Mercury (known as Hermes in Greek mythology) is best known for his winged shoes, which allowed him to fly swiftly as the messenger of his fellow Olympians. Mercury had other duties too, including serving as the god of merchants, travelers, and tricksters; he also ushered souls of the departed to the Underworld.

*Quicksilver* tells three tales of the Roman god. The first movement (*Antics of a Newborn God*) opens with the birth of Mercury; after he takes his first steps, he toddles around, gleefully looking for mischief. He stumbles across a herd of cows that belong to his brother Apollo; Mercury slyly lets the cows out of their pen before toddling onward with his mischief-making. In the second movement (*Guiding Souls to the Underworld*), Pluto, god of the Underworld, bids Mercury to bring him fresh souls. The movement begins with death-knells tolling for humans who are about to die; Mercury picks up these souls and leads them down to the gates of the Underworld. The third and final movement (*Messenger of Olympus*) depicts Mercury as he is busily running errands for various gods and goddesses. We first encounter him mid-flight as he dashes to earth to find Aeneas, a Trojan lieutenant who had been run out of Troy by the invading Greeks. Aeneas is on a quest to find land on which to establish a new city that would eventually become Rome. While traveling, he is distracted from his quest when he meets the beautiful queen Dido. They live together for many years before Mercury intervenes; he chastises Aeneas for giving up on his quest and persuades him to pick it up again. As Aeneas mournfully resumes his journey, we hear Dido perish of a...
broken heart. Mercury then takes to the skies to seek out Perseus, who is preparing to kill the Medusa, the hideous gorgon who has snakes for hair and a gaze that turns those who catch her glance into stone. Mercury advises Perseus on how to slay Medusa and lends Perseus his sword to do the deed. We hear Perseus victorious in the beheading of Medusa, after which Mercury takes to the skies once more to fly home to Olympus.

Stacy Garrop’s residency has been made possible by The Band Leadership Endowment, funding from the Crane Student Association, and the Crane School of Music.

About the Soloist:
Casey Grev is Assistant Professor of Saxophone at the Crane School of Music. A dedicated performer of contemporary music, Dr. Grev was an invited performer at the Hot Air Music Festival, San Francisco Center for New Music, Resonant Bodies Festival, Society of Composers Inc. National Conference, Northwestern University New Music Conference, The Ohio State University Contemporary Music Festival, and was selected to study at the 2016 Darmstadt Summer Courses for New Music. As a chamber musician, Dr. Grev performs regularly with the Viridian Saxophone Quartet and the Protean Duo. He has received awards at the Coleman, Fischoff, Music Teachers National Association, and North American Saxophone Alliance Chamber Music Competitions. Dr. Grev received both his Masters and Doctoral degrees from Michigan State University, where he was a recipient of the University Distinguished Fellowship and studied with Joseph Lulloff. Dr. Grev’s undergraduate degrees in Music Education and Music Performance are from Ohio State University, where he studied with James Hill.

Ecstatic Waters
Steven Bryant

Steven Bryant’s musical interests span a variety of styles, and his catalog includes numerous works for bands, chamber music, electronic and electro-acoustic, orchestra, and music for the web. He studied composition with John Corigliano at The Juilliard School, Cindy McTee at the University of North Texas, and Francis McBeth at Ouachita University.

Composed in 2008, Ecstatic Waters is music of dialectical tension—a juxtaposition of contradictory or opposing musical and extra-musical elements and an attempt to resolve them. The five connected movements hint at a narrative that touches upon naïveté, divination, fanaticism, post-human possibilities, anarchy, order, and the Jungian collective unconscious. Or: poet W. B. Yeats meets futurist thinker Ray Kurzweil.

The title is taken from the poetry of Yeats, whose idiosyncratic personal mythology and symbolism of spiraling chaos and looming apocalypse figured prominently in the genesis of the work. Yet in a nod to the piece’s structural reality—as a hybrid of electronics and living players—Ecstatic Waters also references the confrontation of unruly humanity with the order of the machine, as well as the potential of a post-human synthesis.

The first movement, “Ceremony of Innocence,” begins as a pure expression of exuberant joy. The movement grows in momentum, becoming perhaps too exuberant. The initial simplicity evolves into a full-throated brashness bordering on dangerous arrogance and naïveté, though it retreats from the brink and ends by returning to the opening innocence.

In the second movement, “Augurs,” the unsustainable nature of the previous ceremony becomes apparent, as the music slowly diffuses into microtonal clusters. Chorale-like fragments appear, foretelling the wrathful self-righteousness of the third movement. “Augurs” grows inexorably, spiraling wider and wider until the center cannot hold, ultimately erupting with supreme force into “The Generous Wrath of Simple Men.”

The third movement is deceptive, musically contradicting what one might expect of its title. While it erupts at the outset with overwhelming wrath, it quickly collapses into a relentless simmering rhythm. Lyrical lines unfold around this, interrupted briefly by the forceful anger of a chorale, almost as if trying to drown out and deny anything but its own existence. A moment of delicate lucidity arrives amidst this back-and-forth struggle, but the chorale ultimately dominates, subsuming everything, spiraling out of control, and exploding.

The “Loving Machinery of Justice” brings machine-like clarity and judgment. Subtle, internal gyrations between atonality and tonality underpin the dialogue between lyric melody and mechanized accompaniment. A brooding and emphatic resolution seamlessly transitions into the epilogue, “Spiritus Mundi.”

Reprising music from each movement, this short meditative conclusion reconciles and releases the earlier excesses and the music gradually fades into the silence from where it first emerged.

Program note by Steven Bryant