THE CRANE WIND ENSEMBLE

Program Notes • Thursday, 16 March 2018

CANZON NONI TONI

Giovanni Gabrieli

Many liturgical motets were performed in St. Mark's with instruments accompanying the multiple choirs. At first, unspecified instruments could be used to simply double vocal lines and strengthen the textures. Venetian congregations were accustomed to hearing mixed ensembles of voices and instruments as a local performance practice. Sackbuts, precursors to the modern trombone, and cornetts, trumpet-like instruments made out of wood that are now extinct, were likely choices for these duties. Eventually, instruments began performing these polychoral vocal compositions without the voices, and by the end of the 16th century original works were being written for use within the liturgical service. In 1597 Giovanni Gabrieli published his first collection of works, known as the *Sacrae Symphoniae*. This volume consisted of forty-five vocal works and sixteen pieces for instrumental ensemble. The *Canzon Noni Toni a 8* was first published as part of this set.

In 1598 Gabrieli's *Sacrae Symphoniae* were reprinted in the Germanic lands north of the Alps. As his music became widely known, many northern aristocrats sent their young musicians to study with Gabrieli in Venice, thus composers in their formative years were exposed to Gabrieli's style of polychoral writing in antiphonal textures, text setting, and the growing potential of instrumental composition. Through the publication of his music outside of Venice and the direct propagation of his musical and compositional philosophies, Gabrieli's musical language would spread across the European continent at the beginning of the 17th century.

Note by Kevin Geraldi

DIVERTIMENTO FOR WIND ORCHESTRA

Jindřich Feld

Four years younger than Karel Husa – also a native of Prague – Jindřich Feld was born into a well-established musical family. Both Feld's mother and father were violinists – his father, a professor at the conservatory. Unlike Husa, the younger Feld remained in Prague, obtaining all his musical education in that city. Beginning his career as a free-lance composer, Feld eventually obtained a post at the Prague Conservatory as Professor of Composition from 1972-86. During this time he also served two guest-lectureships at Indiana University: in 1981 and 1984.

In his *Divertimento for Wind Orchestra*, Jindřich Feld creates a tightly composed neo-classic work embodying the quintessence of *Gebrauchsmusik* as employed by Paul Hindemith in the 1920s and 30s. Indeed, in most compositional aspects, this work is reminiscent of Hindemith's style, while at the same time retaining a point of view – and a sense of whimsical jocularity – which most assuredly belongs to Feld.

The "Little Overture" begins with a rousing introduction before introducing various members and sections of the ensemble in a series of imitative entrances on a theme. Variants of the introduction also frame the middle section of the work, where imitation and development of the theme continue. In the recapitulation, the theme is inverted, but still passed around the ensemble. One final variant of the introduction heralds the coda, bringing this compact overture to a close. The "Intermezzo" gently rolls along in ABAB form. The A-section is fully scored, with the jaunty, but angular melody in the soprano woodwinds. The B-section contrasts not only by virtue of its sparse scoring, but also in the manner in which the melody is broken up and passed around. "Rondo" is in a brisk six-eight meter, also clearly sectionalized. Feld's preference for rapid distribution of melody in both solo and sectional work again appears in this movement. Although full of energy, this movement comes to a dramatically quiet close – further enhancing the work's charming humor.

JAMES ENSOR'S HARMONIUM

Paolo Ugoletti

Paolo Ugoletti was born in Brescia in 1956. He began his musical studies under the guidance of his mother and later continued at the Conservatory Brescia. In 1979 he attended Franco Donatoni's composition courses at Accademia Chigiana.

He began teaching composition at the Conservatory of Pesaro, then he moved to Bologna and Parma Conservatories. In 1987 he was composer in residence at University of California – Santa Cruz University, where he became familiar with the music of Lou Harrison, Arvo Pärt, John Adams and Keith Jarrett. Since 1989, he has been teacher and faculty member at the Luca Marenzio Conservatory in Brescia.

A long and fruitful co-operation with the Umbrian Music Festival resulted in several commissions. From these collaborations, the *Missa Solemnis Resurrectionis*, a work by several different composers, emerged. Ugoletti was requested to compose the "Gloria" written for tenor, choir and orchestra and the work was premiered in Rome during the Youth World Council Jubilee 2000. He was also commissioned to complete the "Lacrymosa" and "Amen" of Mozart's *Requiem in D Minor K.626*.

In the 1990s he began studying traditional Irish music. The strength and warmth of that music is the inspiration for many of his works, especially those related to ancient Irish texts. In 1998-1999 he produced two sets of preludes for solo piano: *Terra di confini* (*Borderland*) and *La fonte nascosta* (*The secret spring*). Starting in 2000 he composed works for solos, choir and orchestra including instruments from different musical genres such as Uillean pipes, tin whistle, Celtic harp,

electric guitar, electric bass, electric keyboards and drums. Since 2003, his collaboration with the painter Rinaldo Turati resulted in sound tracks the exhibitions.

Paolo Ugoletti has no publisher and he is independent of any compositional "school." He loves every way of expression without prejudice. He currently lives and works in Nave, just northeast of Brescia.

James Ensor's Harmonium draws inspiration from the Belgian painter James Sydney Edouard, Baron Ensor. Ensor, a lifelong native of Ostend, Belgium was an important influence in both the Impressionist and Surrealist movements in art. Arguably, his most famous work is *The Entry of Christ into Brussels* (1888) – a massive work which adorned his studio. Ensor was also something of an amateur musician whose "instrument of choice" was the harmonium. There is a famous photograph of Ensor, sitting at his harmonium in front of *The Entry of Christ into Brussels*, which fills the wall. The arrangement in the photograph gives the impression that Ensor is accompanying the processional. As a citizen of Ostend, Ensor was involved in its philanthropic endeavors, creating in 1898 the "Bal du Rat Mort" (Dead Rat Ball), a masked and costume ball held at the Casino Kursaal in Ostend as part of carnival season prior to Lent.

The notion of *masks* plays an underlying role in *James Ensor's Harmonium* in several ways. There are the literary connections to Ensor himself – not only via the "Bal du Mort," but in his paintings wherein carnival-esque masks play a central theme. Ugoletti creates musical parallels within the composition itself through the use of polytonal harmonies separated by a tritone, such as C major and F# major – commonly referred to as the "Petrushka Chord." In Stravinsky's ballet, *Petrushka*, three puppets are brought to life during the Shrovetide Fair in a tale of love, jealousy, and demise. The inherent duality of the Petrushka Chord reflects the dual nature of Petrushka himself, both puppet and human being.

The concerto itself is cast in a single movement, divided into three large sections and a coda-like recapitulation of the first section. The first section itself is divided into several recurring sections, delineated by meter changes. The second large section gives the impression of a relaxed polytonal *Romanze*, contrasted by the third large section, which has a "cool-jazz" affect. Like a mask, fixed in its expression, *James Ensor's Harmonium* uses ostinatos and repeated motives – fixed ideas – to create the rhythmic intricacy, melodic drive, and harmonic movement of his concerto for E-flat, B-flat and Bass Clarinet.

HYPERPRISM

Edgard Varèse

Edgard Varèse experienced a compositionally fertile period between 1922 and 1925, with premieres of *Offrandes*, *Hyperprism*, *Octandre*, and *Intégrales* by New York City's International Composers Guild. While all the Guild concerts were well attended and considered successes, *Hyperprism* helped Varèse achieve a notoriety rivaling Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* premiere. As writer Eric Salzman notes, "*Hyperprism* brought the audience to blows and Varèse to a new kind of fame. The music was violently attacked, but it also had its defenders, notably Lawrence Gilman of the New York *Herald Tribune* and Paul Rosenfeld, critic of *The Dial,* a leading literary periodical of the day." Composer Charles Martin Loeffler penned a bit of begrudgingly positive critique:

> It would be the negation of all the centuries of musical progress if I were to call this music…Nevertheless…this piece roused in me a sort of subconscious racial memory, something elemental that happened before the beginning of recorded time. It affected me as only music of the past has affected me.

Some of the more acidic invective labeled the work as, "shrieks from a zoo, the din of passing trains, the hammering of a drunken woodpecker, a thunderbolt striking a tinplate factory." However, *Hyperprism* was championed by Leopold Stokowksi who conducted the work both in Philadelphia and New York; he went on to conduct several successive premieres of Varèse's music.

The title of the work does not infer any specific meaning, although it evokes scientific or geometric imagery. However, just as a prism scatters light, so Varèse's musical process scatters musical fragments amongst two groups – percussion instruments and wind instruments. In each section in the work, both groups have defined roles: primary, secondary, solo (with the other group tacit), and co-equal.

HIVEMIND

Peter Van Zandt Lane

Hivemind is a fast-paced, energetic piece for winds and percussion. Thematically, the piece explores the idea of consensus building. Scattered themes and fragments gradually come together into more cohesive units. Melodies emerge from buzzing textures, trying to make sense of conflicting harmonies. Instruments imitate each other in different ways, until they finally agree on how the music goes, in the more climactic moments of the piece. The ensemble is grounded by two percussionists, each with economical and identical instrument setups, who constantly bounce rhythms back and forth from the far sides of the stage (until they, also, coalesce into unity). I like to think of the resulting antiphony between percussionists (and other instrument groups as well), as a conversation between the left-brain and right-brain--a spacial and musical dialogue that reinforces the dichotomy between what is structured and what is free; what is anticipated and what is surprising; and between what is cerebral and what is emotive.

This piece was commissioned by the Sydney Conservatorium Wind Symphony for their inaugural Estivo Festival in Verona, Italy, conducted by John P. Lynch, to whom the piece is dedicated. It was composed at the MacDowell Colony in the spring of 2014.

Note by Peter Van Zandt Lane

THE FROZEN CATHEDRAL

John Mackey

The Koyukon call it "Denali," meaning "the great one," and it is great. It stands at more than twenty thousand feet above sea level, a towering mass over the Alaskan wilderness. Measured from its base to its peak, it is the tallest mountain on land in the world—a full two thousand feet taller than Mount Everest. It is Mount McKinley, and it is an awesome spectacle. And it is the inspiration behind John Mackey's *The Frozen Cathedral*.

The piece was born of the collaboration between Mackey and John Locke, Director of Bands at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Locke asked Mackey if he would dedicate the piece to the memory of his late son, J.P., who had a particular fascination with Alaska and the scenery of Denali National Park. Mackey agreed—and immediately found himself grappling with two problems.

> How does one write a concert closer, making it joyous and exciting and celebratory, while also acknowledging, at least to myself, that this piece is rooted in unimaginable loss: The death of a child?
>
> The other challenge was connecting the piece to Alaska - a place I'd never seen in person. I kept thinking about all of this in literal terms, and I just wasn't getting anywhere. My wife, who titles all of my pieces, said I should focus on what it is that draws people to these places. People go to the mountains—these monumental, remote, ethereal and awesome parts of the world—as a kind of pilgrimage. It's a search for the sublime, for transcendence. A great mountain is like a church. "Call it The Frozen Cathedral," she said.
>
> I clearly married up.

The most immediately distinct aural feature of the work is the quality (and geographic location) of intriguing instrumental colors. The stark, glacial opening is colored almost exclusively by a crystalline twinkling of metallic percussion that surrounds the audience. Although the percussion orchestration carries a number of traditional sounds, there are a host of unconventional timbres as well, such as crystal glasses, crotales on timpani, tam-tam resonated with superball mallets, and the waterphone, an instrument used by Mackey to great effect on his earlier work *Turning*. The initial sonic environment is an icy and alien one, a cold and distant landscape whose mystery is only heightened by a longing, modal solo for bass flute—made dissonant by a contrasting key, and more insistent by the eventual addition of alto flute, English horn, and bassoon. This collection expands to encompass more of the winds, slowly and surely, with their chorale building in intensity and rage. Just as it seems their wailing despair can drive no further, however, it shatters like glass, dissipating once again into the timbres of the introductory percussion.

The second half of the piece begins in a manner that sounds remarkably similar to the first. In reality, it has been transposed into a new key and this time, when the bass flute takes up the long solo again, it resonates with far more compatible consonance. The only momentary clash is a Lydian influence in the melody, which brings a brightness to the tune that will remain until the end. Now, instead of anger and bitter conflict, the melody projects an aura of warmth, nostalgia, and even joy. This bright spirit pervades the ensemble, and the twinkling colors of the metallic percussion inspire a similar percolation through the upper woodwinds as the remaining winds and brass present various fragmented motives based on the bass flute's melody. This new chorale, led in particular by the trombones, is a statement of catharsis, at once banishing the earlier darkness in a moment of spiritual transcendence and celebrating the grandeur of the surroundings. A triumphant conclusion in E-flat major is made all the more jubilant by the ecstatic clattering of the antiphonal percussion, which ring into the silence like voices across the ice.

Program note by Jake Wallace

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Crane Bands would like to thank Alumna Christina Rawady for her generous donation of time and talent as a sit-in for Henri Bok during early rehearsals of *James Ensor's Harmonium*.

We would also like to thank Christina and current Crane student Solomon Elyaho for transporting Henri Bok and Paolo Ugoletti during their residency.

The appearance of Henri Bok and Paolo Ugoletti was made possible through the generous support of the Crane Band Leadership Fund, the Crane Student Association, Buffet, and D'Addario.