

**Percy Grainger (1882-1961)**

***Mock Morris* (1910) (Trans. By Joseph Kreines)**

Percy Aldridge Grainger was born in Melbourne, Australia and was schooled mostly under the auspices of his mother. By the age of 13, he had made his debut as a solo pianist, followed by a move to Frankfurt to study at the Hoch Conservatory. Following his education in Germany, he moved to London with his mother and slowly established himself as an international concert pianist. However talented he was at the piano, he always had a yearning to compose. It was during this period that Grainger toured the English countryside collecting folk songs straight from the source: often working-class, common folk. Grainger's interest in this collection was not to simply arrange these songs into neat compositions, but to emphasize the way the singer presented the songs, with the resulting rhythms, inflections, and ornaments. To do this, Grainger had singers record on Edison wax cylinders, one of the earliest uses of recording technology to capture the human voice.

While many of Grainger's works incorporate and feature these collected folk songs, like his seminal composition, *Lincolnshire Posy*, *Mock Morris* is an original work. Though the composition utilizes original thematic material, the listener might find it difficult to believe that it is indeed original. Grainger repeatedly asserted the originality of the piece to skeptical listeners, while admitting that one theme was "(unwittingly) cribbed from an early *Magnificat* of Cryil Scott."

*Mock Morris* is a buoyant, jaunty romp, inspired by the traditional English Morris folk dance. There have been several settings of the work, but the original was written for a small, six piece string ensemble in 1910. The American composer and educator, Joseph Kreines, transcribed the work for band and wind ensemble in 1991.

**Gordon Jacob (1895-1984)**

***An Original Suite* (1928)**

Gordon Jacob was a 20th Century English composer who stylistically composed in the tradition of Ralph Vaughan-Williams and Gustav Holst.

Jacob composed several band works at a time when there were few compositions written specifically for bands. Most bands in that era performed marches, popular music of the day and transcriptions of orchestral works. Jacob's *An Original Suite* was composed specifically for military band, which is an early 20th century predecessor to what has become the symphonic wind band. In fact, it is believed that the word "original" was required by the work's publisher to distinguish the work as non-popular fare.

There are three movements to the suite, which are stylistically varied. The first movement is elegant, while the second is pensive. The piece concludes with a perky and quirky final movement.

**Matthew LaRocca (b. 1980)**

***Arctic Voices* (2013)**

Matt LaRocca is a composer, performer and educator living in Somerville, Massachusetts. He holds a B.A. from Middlebury College in chemistry and music, a M.Mus. from Carnegie Mellon University in music composition, and is currently a Doctoral student at Boston University. After spending several years as a chemist after college, he switched professions in order to focus fully on music. As a composer, much of his inspiration is drawn from the natural world, the environment, and historic

events. In addition to composing, Matt is an active performer of several genres of music on both the guitar and viola.

The composer writes about *Arctic Voices*:

In October 2012, I joined a group of artists from around the world on an expedition to the Arctic Circle. For over two weeks, we lived aboard a traditional sailing ship named the Antigua and traveled around the island of Svalbard, an archipelago north of Norway and approximately 400 miles shy of the North Pole. The expedition was designed to foster the creation of art influenced by the arctic environment. Work from our trip will include paintings, photographs, videos, novels, art installations, and music. Another project from the residency will be a piece of new music written specifically for high school students that will serve as an introduction to contemporary playing techniques, while also establishing a connection to a quickly disappearing part of our world. The groups I am partnering with for this commission are the New Jersey Youth Symphony and the Interschool Orchestra of New York.

The world of Svalbard is like nothing I had ever experienced. Everything there is at the same time beautiful, scary, lonely, impossibly remote, oppressive, other-worldly, and awe inspiring. It is a region of the earth that is rapidly changing, and I count myself as one of the unbelievably lucky ones to have been there. On our journey around the island, we saw polar bears feasting on seals, northern lights illuminating the sky above us, beautiful and incomprehensibly blue icebergs, giant ten-story building sized chunks of glaciers calving off into the sea, abandoned cities, and landscapes which seem to have originated in an alien world.

When I returned home from my trip, I began to work on the music for the Metropolitan Wind Symphony commission. I had started the piece earlier in the summer, but upon coming home found that I had absolutely no interest in what I had previously written. To me, it was music destined for the trashcan. I was so taken by my time in Svalbard that all I wanted to do was write about the Arctic. This work is inspired by the journey, and the different voices of the Arctic I could hear in my head while up North. Primordial and ethereal soundscapes yield to a plaintive melody, a song that gives rise to energetic rumblings and cracklings, which in turn fall apart only to allow sea shanties both mournful and powerful emerge out of fog.

I wish to extend a big thank you to Lew Buckley, Bobby Piankian, and the Metropolitan Wind Symphony. I am very thankful to have had the opportunity to compose this piece, and the experience has been wonderful.

**Lewis J. Buckley** (b. 1947)

***The Yellow Rose of Texas Variations*** (1994)

US Coast Guard Band euphonium soloist Dan Vinson commissioned Lewis Buckley to write *The Yellow Rose of Texas Variations* for the occasion of the USCG Band's first-ever concert tour through Texas, Vinson's home state. Vinson asked Buckley for a traditional theme and variations piece in the mold of the famous euphonium and cornet solos from early in the last century.

Following the form of J. B. Arban's famous *Fantaisie and Variations on "The Carnival of Venice,"* *Yellow Rose* offers many of the same kinds of variations contained in the Arban. The opening theme is followed

by a triple-tonguing variation, a classic Polacca, a dramatic slow variation, and the inevitable final "dash" to the end, complete with blazing scale passages.

Like the Arban *Carnival*, *Yellow Rose* is designed for the sole purpose of displaying a talented soloist's technical virtuosity.

In the nearly 20 years since its composition, Buckley's *The Yellow Rose of Texas Variations* has been so popular that at the requests of various soloists, he has transcribed the original band accompaniment for brass band, brass quintet, and most recently, for orchestra.

**Morton Gould** (1913-1996)

***Santa Fe Saga*** (1956)

Morton Gould was a prolific American composer, conductor, arranger and pianist. Gould published his first work at the tender age of six. During the Depression, Gould, still a teenager, played piano in various New York City movie theaters and vaudeville venues. When Radio City Music Hall opened in 1932, Gould was hired as the staff pianist. He went on to compose music for Broadway, television and ballet.

Gould also was an active conductor who has led all the major American orchestras. He recorded many works of the standard orchestral repertoire, including George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, on which he also performed as pianist. Gould was an active member of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP). From 1986 until 1994, he served as the society's President. During his tenure, he lobbied for the intellectual property rights of performing artists, recognizing the potential threat to those rights by the nascent Internet. Gould died while serving as the first guest composer/conductor-in-residence at the newly opened Disney Institute in Orlando, Florida.

*Santa Fe Saga* was composed in collaboration with the ballet choreographer Elliot Feld. It is programmatic in nature and is written to evoke the history and images of the culture in and around Santa Fe, New Mexico. This one movement work is comprised of four distinct sections: "Rio Grande," "Round Up," "Wagon Train" and "Fiesta."

**Rossano Galante** (b. 1967)

***Redemption*** (2011)

Rossano Galante was born in Buffalo, NY in 1967 and earned a degree in trumpet performance from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He then attended the film scoring program at the University of Southern California where he studied with film composer Jerry Goldsmith. Galante's film credits include *Big Fat Liar*, *Scary Movie 2*, *The Tuxedo*, and *Tuesdays With Morrie*. Commissions for his music have come from the Amherst Chamber Orchestra, Hofstra University Symphonic Band, Nebraska Wind Symphony, Syracuse Symphony Youth Orchestra, and West Genesee High School Wind Ensemble.

*Redemption* is a lyrical, lush, romantic composition that captures the euphoria one experiences after being saved from emotional crisis.

**Robert Sheldon** (b. 1954)

***River Trail Expedition*** (2011)

Robert Sheldon holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Education degree from the University of Miami and Master of Fine Arts in Instrumental Conducting degree from University of Florida. He has over 28 years of teaching experience in public schools as well as teaching in several universities. Sheldon also is an award-winning composer of wind band music and has written several band and orchestra method books.

Written for the Streator High School Band in Illinois, *River Trail Expedition* is named for the Hopalong Cassidy River Trail that winds along the banks of the Vermilion River. The trail borrows its name from the Hopalong Cassidy series of books, written by Streator native Clarence E. Mulford. This concert overture has an energetic drive, which is enhanced by punctuated rhythms and edgy dissonances that contrast with the lyrical and tuneful melodies found throughout the piece.

**David Maslanka** (b. 1943)

***Tears*** (1994)

David Maslanka is an American composer who has composed over 40 pieces of band and wind ensemble music including several symphonies and a Mass. He has also written wind chamber music, including four wind quintets, two saxophone quartets and several solo works with piano accompaniment.

Maslanka was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts and has studied composition with Joseph Wood and H. Owen Reed. He has served on the faculties of the State University of New York at Geneseo, Sarah Lawrence College, New York University, and Kingsborough Community College of the City University of New York, and since 1990, has been a freelance composer based in Missoula, Montana.

The following is the composer's description of *Tears*:

The title "Tears" comes from my reading of the novel "Monnew" by the African writer Ahmadou Kourouma. His story tells of the dissolution of a traditional African culture as Europeans overran it. The native people were made to endure the "monnew" – the insults, outrages, trials, contempts, and humiliations – of colonialism. A chapter heading in Kourouma's book reads, "Our tears will not be abundant enough to make a river, nor our cries of pain sharp enough to extinguish fires." This is the external motivation for the piece, but I don't know anyone in Africa directly. I have come to understand that fascination with something in the external world means that a thing deep inside has been touched. So the piece is about something in me. Over the years my music has acted as predictor for me. It gives me advance nonverbal messages about things I don't understand yet – movements of my unconscious that are working their way toward the light.

*Tears* finally is about inner transformation, and about groping toward the voice of praise. As St. Francis and St. Ignatius have it, the proper function of the human race is to sing praise. *Tears* is about inner breaking, and coming to terms with the pain that hinders the voice of praise; *Tears* is about the movement toward the heart of love.

My dear friend Richard Beale has captured these thoughts in a brief and powerful poem:

Unless tears come to wash my eyes  
I will not see again.

Unless I lift my arms in gratitude for pain  
They will lack the strength to harvest daffodils.

from *Silence and the Gift* by Richard Beale, St. Andrew's Press, Big Island, Virginia

**Frank Ticheli** (b. 1958)

***Joy Revisited*** (2005)

We close this afternoon's program with the appropriately named *Joy Revisited*. *Joy Revisited* is a companion piece to *Joy*. The two pieces were an experiment in the creation of two works that use the same general melodic, harmonic and expressive content. *Joy* was created for young musicians, while *Joy Revisited*, was created for a more advanced ensemble, enabling wider register use and more thorough development of thematic material.

Frank Ticheli is Professor of Composition at the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music. He has written for orchestra, chamber ensemble, and choir, but he is perhaps best known for his more than twenty pieces for concert band, including *Cajun Folk Songs* and *Postcard*. The Metropolitan Wind Symphony has recently performed several Ticheli pieces, including the jazz-inspired *Blue Shades* and the beautiful and melancholy *Rest*.

The composer describes the piece best:

The main melody and the overall mood of *Joy* and *Joy Revisited* were inspired by a signal event: the birth of our first child. The intense feelings that most any father would feel on such a day were, in my case, accompanied by a simple little tune which grabbed hold of me in the hours preceding her birth, and refused to let go throughout the day and many days thereafter. Indeed, until I jotted it down in my sketchbook, it did not release its grip.

Seven years and two children later, I stumbled upon that old sketch and discovered (or rediscovered) that it would serve perfectly as the foundation for a joy-filled concert band overture.

A special note: *Joy Revisited* was offered for free to the Metropolitan Wind Symphony if we performed the work as a part of a fundraiser for victims of Hurricane Sandy. The Metropolitan Wind Symphony is honored to be a part of this important effort and we thank you for your contributions to Hurricane Sandy relief today.

Program notes by Gregory C. Depp