

WILLIAMS SYMPHONIC WINDS  
Steven Dennis Bodner, Music Director

DANCE MIX

Friday, May 14, 2004

Dance, like all the arts, finds expression in an apparently infinite range of styles, forms and techniques: it may satisfy the simplest inner needs for emotional release through motor activity, as in children's singing-games, or the most complex demands of the creative artist on the professional stage; it may be profoundly subjective or philosophical, or purely decorative or virtuoso; it ranges from the ecstatically Dionysiac to the calmly Apollonian, the hypnotic to the cerebral, the totally pantomimic to the totally abstract, the completely functional – that is, serving a social or ritual purpose – to art for art's sake. Like music, dance may be performed either in solitary privacy, or by groups for their own satisfaction, or in a concert or theatrical setting. What seems to be unique to dance, however, is that it appears never to stand alone, but always to be accompanied by musical sound, at however simple a level. For the ancient Greeks, in fact, music, dance and poetry were represented by the single term *mousiki* (art of the Muses).

Julia Sutton

**Steve Martland: *Kick* (1996)**

Drawing from a wide range of stylistic influences (rock, jazz, and a distinct strain of European minimalism), with an aesthetic based on the deep equivalence of the serious and the vernacular, the octane music of Steve Martland seems to fascinate and infuriate in equal measure.

Peter Quinn

[Listening to Martland's music] is rather like inviting into your home one of those cars with booming hi-fi that pause outside your house at night when you are trying to sleep. It is described as "Rock meets Reich", but it's more like brain-dead dance music meets brainless minimalism. If you don't have a headache before you start listening, the odds are you will have one after being affronted by it.

Matthew Rye

Once described as an "insomniac bad-boy," Steve Martland (b. 1959, Liverpool) is without question one of the most controversial figures in classical music today. He studied composition in Holland with Louis Andriessen, who has influenced both his musical and political views. He is concerned with bringing his music to an audience beyond a privileged elite, while also working to reform the music education system in the United Kingdom. Martland rejects academic dogma, instead embracing a plurality of musical influences. Most recently, he has entirely stopped writing music for "classical" ensembles, instead electing to write primarily for his own ensemble, the Steve Martland Band—an amplified ensemble of three saxophones, trumpet, trombone, violin, guitar, bass, piano, and percussion. While his music is high energy and high impact (characteristics for which Martland makes no apologies), Martland describes his sound as "very rhythmic and dance-like, with a lyrical singing side." The surface of his music, influenced heavily by the minimalism of Reich and Andriessen as well as the sound of rock bands, belies its frightening level of difficulty and rhythmic complexity.

*Kick* was written for a performance of the Steve Martland Band associated with the 1996 European football cup final; the booking of the performance was contingent upon Martland writing a piece with a "football-theme." *Kick* fulfills the brief—as Martland writes that he did "[his] best to find a connection where none exists!"—by subjecting a spirited 17<sup>th</sup>-century, anonymous English fiddle tune to a series of punchy deconstructive variations. Once the tune is presented by the full band (with the solo violin

featured), five variations follow; the last variation almost restates the original tune, but with the dance undermined by alternating regular and irregular meters. While Kenneth Walton of BBC Magazine irreverently described the piece's premiere with, "[The Band] knocked the stuffing out of a tender old English folk tune in the same way a Millwall supporter would mug a nice old lady," Justin Davidson of Newsweek wrote instead:

*Kick* opens with an explosive chord and a quiet, burbling marimba. Immediately, an Elizabethan fiddle melody cycles through a thickening, ever-more-raucous accompaniment, frantic with hiccupping rhythms and lurching changes of pace. Like so much music in these eclectic times, the piece is saturated with influences. Echoes of Jethro Tull, minimalism, TV-show house bands and jazz-rock fusion groups such as Weather Report are held together by dint of sheer ensemble virtuosity.

### **Michael Weinstein: *Suite of Dances* (2003)**

The *Suite of Dances* was commissioned in 2002 by a consortium led by Bill Drury, conductor of the NEC Jordan Winds, and including Williams College, USAF Band of Mid-America, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Creighton University, Michigan State University, Calgary University, and the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. The idea for the piece was suggested by Lt. Col. Steven Grimo, conductor of the USAF Band of Mid-America, who was interested in an original work for one of the chamber ensembles—a double woodwind quintet with two percussionists—derived from the full band. Completed in May 2003, the piece was, as Weinstein writes,

...originally envisioned to have been on the "lighter side"—hence the title *Suite of Dances*; in reality, and with the possible exception of the waltz-like second movement, the piece turned out a bit weightier than intended. The work is loosely based on rotating hexachords derived from a handful of twelve-tone series but interpreted freely in a "referentially tonal" sound-world. There is a short five note motto B-A-C#-C-B which occurs at important structural moments in four out of five movements, including the last movement, a driving "perpetual motion" that continually hurtles towards the final A -the overall pitch center of the entire piece.

When composing the work, Weinstein intended that three of the original five movements of the work be performable without percussion; for tonight's performance, the premiere of the wind/brass-alone version, Michael has rewritten portions of the second movement, allowing its inclusion in tonight's concert.

Born on June 26, 1960 in Switzerland, Michael H. Weinstein is a composer, theorist, educator, and hornist. He studied at S.U.N.Y. Purchase (B.F.A.), the New England Conservatory of Music (M.M.), and received his Ph.D. in Composition and Theory from Brandeis University in 1991. His principal composition teachers include Marty Boykan, Malcolm Peyton, Harold Shapero and Yehudi Wyner. He is the chair of the music department at the Cambridge School of Weston and an Assistant Professor of Composition and member of the brass faculty at Berklee College of Music. In addition, he leads the composition seminar at the Walnut Hill School of the Arts and teaches classes and lessons in theory, composition, and horn at the New England Conservatory of Music Preparatory Division. He is third horn with the Nashua Symphony Orchestra in New Hampshire. He has been awarded four "Patentring" fellowships to play with the studio ensembles of the contemporary music festival in Darmstadt, Germany (1992, 94, 96, & 98) and worked in master-classes with trombonists Barrie Webb & Michael Svoboda and trumpeter Markus Stockhausen. His works have been commissioned/performed and recorded by organizations including: the NEC Wind Ensemble & Symphony Orchestra, the Civic Symphony of Boston, the Washington Winds, the ars nova ensemble Berlin, the University of Washington Wind Ensemble, the League ISCM-Boston, and the Massachusetts Instrumental Conductor's Association. Just this month, Weinstein, along with Williams College Music Department Chair David Kechley, was awarded a commission from American Composer's Forum/New England Orchestra Consortium.

### **Wallingford Riegger: *New Dance* (1935)**

Throughout his life, Wallingford Riegger (1885-1961) was regarded as one of the most prominent and articulate modernist composers in the United States. In the 1920s, he was considered a part of the “American Five,” along with Ives, Cowell, Ruggles and Becker; in fact, he has come to be regarded more as a “bridge” between the avant-garde demonstrated by Varèse and Ives and the more populist music of Copland, Harris, and Barber. His music was championed by distinguished conductors such as Leopold Stokowski and Hermann Scherchen. Riegger’s music is marked by an eclectic set of characteristics: the use of conflict and disjunction as primary musical and programmatic elements, a reliance on strict contrapuntal forms, the use of ostinati to create structural reference points, and a harmonic language which freely combines atonal and tonal elements.

Riegger’s integration into the world of the avant garde introduced him to the art which absorbed much of his creative energy throughout the 1930s, the years during which modern dance became recognized as a major and indigenous American art form. Riegger wrote for each of the great pioneers—Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey and Hanya Holm—as they began to build large-scale, narratively-complex dances that not only represented a summation of abstract dance but moved in a fundamentally new direction, from concert to theatre dance.

Premiered in 1935 in Bennington, Vermont, *New Dance* was choreographed by Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman. While it can be viewed as a classic celebration of pure movement, it can also be regarded as a portrait of the world as Humphrey thought it should be. (Riegger shared Humphrey’s socio-political outlook; a Marxist/Communist sympathizer, he was called to testify before the 1957 House Unamerican Activities Committee.) Describing her intent with the ballet, Humphrey writes:

*New Dance* is a choreographically symphonic ballet that represents a world where each person has a clear and harmonious relationship to his fellow beings. To achieve this, the leaders gradually mold and unify the group in a series of stages or “themes.” The triumphant and joyous ending, “Variations and Celebration,” depicts an ideal society that allows for individual expression within group unity.

Riegger’s music to Humphrey’s *New Dance* (1935) and *With my Red Fires* (1936) has both achieved lasting success. In fact, the various arrangements that Riegger made of the “rhythmic piledriver” finale from the ballet (simply titled *New Dance*, as with the work performed this evening) have become his most popular pieces.

### **Dominic Muldowney: *Dance Suite* (1996)**

If Elliott Carter is emotionally speaking, the heir of Schoenberg, then Muldowney is the heir of Stravinsky.

Antony Bye

Born in Southampton in 1952 and educated there at Taunton's Grammar School, Dominic Muldowney began composing at the age of 14. He first studied at Southampton University with Jonathan Harvey and in London with Harrison Birtwistle, and then went on to read music at York University where he studied composition with Bernard Rands and David Blake. He has conducted several performances of works by twentieth-century composers and also his own compositions. In 1975, he was appointed assistant director of the National Theatre and, from 1981-1997, he served as its music director. Muldowney’s success has largely been related to his ability to reconcile his fondness for vernacular gestures with a rigor that been the very essence of modernism. His polyrhythmic intricacies, though, are neither experimental nor expressionistic, but rather, perhaps a post-modernist search for similarity in difference. His work in the theater has led him to a belief that music must be dramatically effective and instantly accessible.

This evening’s performance is of the final three movements of the six-movement *Dance Suite*. Muldowney has written the following about this work:

*Dance Suite* was commissioned by the Colleges Consortium with the BASBWE Education Trust, and the first performance was given by Warwick University Symphonic Wind Ensemble on 25th November, 1996 conducted by Colin Touchin. *Dance Suite* displays a variety of historical dance forms from a twentieth century viewpoint. The six dances move forward historically from the ancient Galliard and Waltz, to the sophisticated Tango and the jazz tradition. The rhythm that typifies each dance is constantly under attack, sometimes from a different dance style altogether. These intrusive elements are most obvious in the final dance and prompt the double meaning of the title.

#### IV. Waltz/Galliard

This is a reversal of the date-shift process in the second movement, in that the wandering goes backwards rather than forwards, particularly to the William Byrd of the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book.

#### V. Tangos

A slow sentimental tango is sandwiched between an abstract deconstructed one, both of which are developed in my opera *The Voluptuous Tango*.

#### VI. Break-Dance

Break-Dance is the fastest, hardest and strangest movement. Its exuberance fractures the texture, which slowly crumbles midway through the movement, only to be resurrected mirror fashion. The piece is a species of palindrome with no true centre, hence: "Break-Dance".

### **Adam Gorb: *Yiddish Dances* (1998)**

Mahler's music continues to hold sway over many a composer. Its structural implications grip some (Boulez, Schoenberg); its indelible melodic idiosyncracies fascinate others (Shostakovich, Britten, Schnittke). Among young composers, Adam Gorb is gradually emerging as a prominent original among the later group... [His music is characterized by] a sustained integration of memorable lyricism combined with a deep concentration of musical thought.

Ronald Weitzman

Adam Gorb was born in 1958 and started composing at the age of 10. At 15 he wrote a set of piano pieces - *A Pianist's Alphabet* - a selection of which were performed on BBC Radio 3 in 1976. In 1977 he went to Cambridge University to study music, where his teachers included Hugh Wood and Robin Holloway. After graduating in 1980 he divided his time between composition and working as a musician in the theatre. In 1987 he met Paul Patterson and started studying with him privately. He began to devote more time to composition and in 1991 started the Advanced Composition course at the Royal Academy of Music, gaining an M.Mus degree in 1992 and graduating in 1993 with the highest honours, including the Principal's Prize. Among his most honored and performed compositions are two works for wind band: *Metropolis*, which has won several prizes including the Walter Beeler Memorial Prize in 1994 and *Awayday*, which has had over 100 performances since its premiere in 1996. In January 2000 Adam Gorb took over from Dr Anthony Gilbert as Head of the School of Composition and Contemporary Music at the Royal Northern College of Music.

Gorb has written the following about this piece:

*Yiddish Dances*, written for Timothy Reynish's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, is very much a party piece. It brings together two of my abiding musical passions: the symphonic wind orchestra and Klezmer—the folk music of the Yiddish-speaking people. The five movements are all based on set Klezmer dances:

**Khosidl:** a medium tempo 2/4 in which the music moves freely between satire, sentimentality, and pathos.

**Terkische:** an up-tempo Jewish tango

**Doina:** a free recitative in which various instruments in the band get a chance to show off

**Hora:** slow 3/8 time with a characteristic rocking rhythm

**Freylakhs:** very fast 2/4 time in which themes from the previous movements are recalled, ending in a riotous "booze-up" for all concerned.