

Williams College Symphonic Winds

From America II: Portraits of Faith and Love

Leonard Bernstein (arr. Bencriscutto): "Profanation" from *Symphony No. 1 ("Jeremiah")*

Arguably the most famous and successful native-born figure in the history of classical music in the United States, Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) was a composer, conductor, pianist and pedagogue. As David Schiff writes, "he bridged the worlds of the concert hall and musical theatre, creating a rich legacy of recordings, compositions, writings and educational institutions." From 1958-1969, he was the music director of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (the first American-born conductor to hold the position), introducing thematic programming and creating the televised Young People's Concerts. In 1973 Bernstein gave the Norton Professor of Poetry lectures at Harvard (filmed for TV and published as *The Unanswered Question*). He won almost every award the American music world had to offer, except the Pulitzer Prize — among others, he was awarded the Kennedy Center Honor for a Lifetime of Contributions to American Culture Through the Performing Arts, election to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, eleven Emmy Awards and the Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. A student of Walter Piston (at Harvard) and Virgil Thomson (at the Curtis Institute), Bernstein created a musical style that was uniquely his. His most profound influence, though, was Aaron Copland; as Schiff continues, "Bernstein took up the Judaic and jazz elements from 1920s Copland, which Copland had mostly abandoned, bringing the jazz up to date in a manner derived from Woody Herman, and giving the prophetic, cantorial elements of early Copland a less austere, more lyrical treatment."

Bernstein's achieved international prominence through a series of events in the early 1940s. A year after being named Serge Koussevitzky's assistant at Tanglewood, Bernstein was appointed assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic in 1943. When Bruno Walter, then conductor of the orchestra, was indisposed on the evening of November 14, 1943, Bernstein replaced him; this dramatic debut, in a concert broadcast nationally, brought him instant fame. He immediately followed that success with three others. His *Symphony No. 1* ("Jeremiah"), premiered by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in January 1944, won the New York Music Critics' Circle award as the best American work of the year. Also in 1944, the ballet *Fancy Free*, choreographed by Jerome Robbins, was first performed at the Metropolitan Opera House and *On the Town* opened on Broadway. Not even thirty years old, Bernstein had catapulted to the center of the American music scene, as a conductor and as a composer of both concert and stage works.

Written in 1942 for a competition sponsored by the New England Conservatory, Bernstein's "*Jeremiah*" *Symphony* was an astonishing debut. Although the work did not win the competition, Fritz Reiner, Bernstein's conducting teacher at Curtis, so admired the piece that he agreed to premiere it with the PSO. (Ironically, after the Boston premiere in February 1944, the *Boston Globe*, in obvious disagreement with the Conservatory, called it the best new competition of the year.) Dedicated to Bernstein's father, the "*Jeremiah*" *Symphony* was intended, according to Bernstein, to create an "emotional quality," not to relate a programmatic story. In three movements, it is the first work of Bernstein, born into a long line of Jewish rabbis, to reflect his religious heritage. While the outer movements ("Prophecy" and "Lamentation") evoke the anxiety of the Jewish people during

the war years, the middle movement ("Profanation") depicts, according to Bernstein, "the chaos and destruction brought about by the pagan corruption within the priesthood and the people." "Profanation" is a manic scherzo, the liturgical melody, derived from a chant used for synagogal readings, undergoing a jagged rhythmic development.

Approved by the composer, this transcription of "Profanation" for wind band was written by Frank Bencriscutto (late Director of Bands at the University of Minnesota) in 1952.

Michael Colgrass: *Old Churches*

I came from a world of music [jazz] where you improvise, and have close contact with your audience, and the music is not intellectualized. We have been hearing for years that melody is dead. And I thought, "I guess that's true," and then all of a sudden I began to ask myself, "Well, why is that true?" Because Pierre Boulez says so?" I'd rather look to Charlie Parker. I'm not trying to pull any tricks or dazzle anybody. I'm trying to make a music which convinces me, and which is interesting to me. It's as simple as that.

Michael Colgrass, from an interview with Joseph Horowitz

One of the most unique and gifted composers alive today, Michael Colgrass (b. 1932) was first drawn to music when he saw drummer Ray Bauduc in a movie playing *Big Noise from Winnetka* with the Bob Crosby Band. When he entered the University of Illinois, he had every intention of studying only jazz music; in fact, he made his living as a jazz drummer performing 5-6 nights a week. When he entered the percussion studio of Paul Price, though, his interests began to widen, eventually to encompass composition studies with Darius Milhaud, Wallingford Riegger, and Lukas Foss. After graduation, he spent twenty one months as timpanist in the Seventh Army Symphony Orchestra in Stuttgart, Germany, before moving to New York City in 1956, where he free-lanced as a percussionist with such diverse groups as the New York Philharmonic, Dizzy Gillespie's band, the original West Side Story orchestra on Broadway, the Columbia Recording Orchestra's Stravinsky conducts Stravinsky series, and numerous ballet, opera and jazz ensembles.

Particularly well known for his orchestral and percussion works, Colgrass has an uncanny ability to write accessible music that simultaneously challenges the intellect and stirs the emotions. His highly personal compositional technique draws on a diversity of styles, reflecting his widespread interests, and involves a free-flowing mixture of tonal and atonal harmonic language. His compositions have been commissioned and performed by the Boston, Detroit and Toronto Symphonies, the Minnesota and National Arts Centre Orchestras, the New York Philharmonic, The Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society, the Manhattan and Muir String Quartets, The Brighton Festival in England, and numerous other orchestras, wind ensembles, chamber groups, choral groups and soloists. Colgrass is the recipient of many grants and fellowships, including two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Rockefeller Grant, and First Prize in the Barlow and Sudler International Wind Ensemble Competitions for his *Winds of Nagual* (1985). He also won the 1978 Pulitzer Prize for Music for "Deja vu," commissioned and premiered by the New York Philharmonic, and an Emmy Award in 1982 for the Public Broadcasting System documentary called "Soundings: The Music of Michael Colgrass". Besides composing, Colgrass has for twenty-five years been giving workshops throughout North America in performance excellence, combining Grotowski physical training, mime, dance and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). He is the author of *My Lessons with Kumi - How I Learned to Perform with Confidence in Life and Work*, a new book which details his techniques for achieving performance excellence.

Commissioned by the American Composers Forum as part of a series of works written by prominent composers specifically for school-age wind bands, *Old Churches* was written in 2001. Colgrass offers the following about the work:

Old Churches uses Gregorian chant to create a slightly mysterious monastery scene filled with prayers and chanting monks in an old church... The chant unfolds through call and response pattern: one monk intones a musical idea, then the rest of the monks respond by singing back. This musical conversation continues throughout the piece, with the exception of a few brief interruptions. Perhaps they are the quiet comments church visitors make to one another.

David Maslanka: Tears

A Massachusetts native now living in Missoula, Montana as a free-lance composer, David Maslanka (b. 1943) was a clarinetist in the New England Conservatory Youth Symphony Orchestra as a high school student. Attending the Oberlin College Conservatory B.M. 1965), he studied composition with Joseph Wood and clarinet with George Waln. After a year at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, he pursued graduate studies at Michigan State University (M.M. 1968, Ph.D. 1971), studying composition with H. Owen Reed. Maslanka's music is characterized by Romantic gestures, a tonal harmonic language and clearly articulated large-scale structures. Works for wind ensemble hold a prominent place in Maslanka's output, including *A Child's Garden of Dreams*, a Mass and several symphonies. His awards for composition include four MacDowell Colony fellowships and grants from ASCAP (three), the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, the National Symphony Orchestra, and the State University of New York Research Foundation. He has served on the faculties of the State University of New York at Geneseo, Sarah Lawrence College, New York University, and Kingsborough College of the City University of New York.

Maslanka has written the following about this work:

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 humiliation — of colonialism... *Tears* 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.

John Frantzen: Pater Noster

Born and raised in Maquoketa, Iowa, John Frantzen (b. 1964) is a graduate of Arizona State University where he studied trombone and instrumental music education. He has studied composition with W.A. Mathieu, author of *The Harmonic Experience*, John Heiss, from the New England Conservatory of Music, and Randall Shinn at Arizona State University. Frantzen's compositions have been performed throughout the United States and most recently Europe. In 1999

he was a finalist in the G. Schirmer Young Americans Band Competition and is currently a finalist in the 2003 Penfield Music Commission Project. In 2002 he was a recipient of an ASCAP standard grant award. As a master Orff-Schulwerk teacher, Frantzen has taught music throughout the United States, including lecturing on the creative process in the Orff-Schulwerk at the University of Massachusetts. He has received national acclaim from the American Composers Forum for his work in education, including the publication of an article in the ACF's national newsletter "Sounding Board" in 1999. He was a guest lecturer and presenter at the 2000 Massachusetts Music Educators Association's state convention and he has appeared as guest conductor and composer at the University of Massachusetts, South Shore Conservatory and the Travis (CA) Public Schools.

Pater Noster was commissioned by a consortium of ten university and college wind ensembles including the Williams College Symphonic Winds. Frantzen writes the following about the piece:

Pater Noster was written in response to the events of September 11, 2001. The title and main thematic material comes from a *Pater Noster* I sang in church growing up in a small town in Iowa. Like many around the world, I was deeply affected by the tragedy. This work explores the inner conflict one experiences in the aftermath of a tragic event. The conflict ultimately reveals two choices. The first leads to reflection and change. The second ignores the tragedy and its consequences. In the end, each of us must decide.

Howard Hanson (arr. Boyd): Suite from the opera *Merry Mount*

Hailed by critics as one of the most important figures in American music in the 20th century, Howard Hanson (1896-1981) was a distinguished American composer, conductor, educator and the pre-eminent advocate of American music. As a conductor, he premiered literally thousands of works by American composers and always encouraged young composers. During his forty-year tenure (1924-1964) as director of the Eastman School of Music, Hanson built the institution into one of the finest university schools of music in America, broadening its curriculum, improving its orchestras, attracting outstanding faculty members, and influencing more than two generations of students. In 1964, Hanson founded the Institute of American Music at the Eastman School, making a substantial financial contribution to help the Institute in meeting its goal of publishing and disseminating American music and providing for research in the history of 20th-century styles. He was also deeply involved with national music organizations, such as the National Association of Schools of Music, the Music Teachers National Association (president, 1930–31), and the Music Educators National Conference. Among Hanson's numerous awards were 36 honorary degrees, membership in the Swedish Royal Academy of Music, a Pulitzer Prize for *Symphony No. 4*, the Ditson Award, the Prix de Rome, and the George Foster Peabody Award; he also won the David Bispham Medal for his only opera, *Merry Mount*. He was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1935 and to the Academy of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1979.

Hanson has generally been considered a neo-Romantic composer, influenced both by his studies with Respighi and by his Scandinavian heritage, specifically the music of Sibelius and Grieg. His music is characterized by a rhythmic vitality combined with transparent textures and melodic and harmonic touches of Impressionism. Hanson's combination of quotations from Gregorian chant and little-known chorales, sometimes biting bitonal harmonies and driving motor rhythms proved highly applicable to the wind band – a medium he explored from the mid-1950s to the 1970s, in such works as *Chorale and Alleluia* and *Dies natalis*.

Howard Hanson's *Merry Mount* was one of the Metropolitan Opera's most successful productions; at its premiere in 1934, the opera received a total of fifty curtain calls, still a house record. Although the opera is no longer in the repertory of major opera houses, Hanson created a suite for orchestra of selections from the opera which remains one of his most performed and recorded works. The opera is based loosely on Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Maypole of Merry Mount", which tells a story, of witchcraft and sexual obsession among Puritan settlers in 17th-century New England, derived from a historical episode involving a Puritan belief that a Saturnalian maypole invented by the devil had been built in 1625 near what is now Quincy, Massachusetts. The plot of the opera is anything but "merry"; set in a Puritan colony in New England, it centers upon Wrestling Bradford, a fanatical young Puritan preacher. Suffering dreams of devils and demonic concubines, he sees in Lady Marigold (a Cavalier from a nearby colony devoted to pleasure called Merry Mount) his demonic vision, Astoreth. Obsessed both by this forbidden love and by his hatred of the Cavaliers' sensuous ways, Pastor Bradford sets in motion what will become the destruction of both colonies. As the fighting continues, Bradford seizes Marigold and runs into the flaming church, the immolation scene concluding this tragic opera.

Three of the four movements of the Suite will be performed this evening. While the "Overture" depicts the austere Puritan character through modal melodies and harmonies, the syncopated playfulness of the "Children's Dance" represents the hedonistic presence of the Cavaliers. Act II of the opera opens with a pastoral prelude to the rousing "Maypole Dances" of the Cavaliers; the celebration is interrupted, however, when the Puritans, appalled by the erection of the maypole, attack the revelers. This version of the Suite for wind ensemble was transcribed by John Boyd, Director of Bands at Indiana State University.