

THE ST. OLAF COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF
MUSIC PRESENTS

THE
ST · OLAF
ORCHESTRA

NORTHFIELD · MINNESOTA · USA

STEVEN AMUNDSON, CONDUCTOR

GAO HONG, PIPA

SUNDAY, MARCH 6, 2011

3:30 P.M.

SKOGLUND CENTER AUDITORIUM, NORTHFIELD, MINNESOTA

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Short Ride in a Fast Machine (Fanfare for Great Woods)

John Adams (b. 1947)

When asked about his title *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*, contemporary American composer John Adams responded with a question: “You know how it is when someone asks you to ride in a terrific sports car, and then you wish you hadn’t?” Characteristic for a fanfare, this piece is a flashy and brilliant blast for a large orchestra with expanded woodwinds and brass, joined by two synthesizers for a splash of color. Written in 1986, this exhilarating work has become one of the most frequently performed 20th century orchestral pieces, serving as a great example of Adams’ distinct brand of minimalism.

Short Ride features a number of typical minimalist characteristics such as repetition, a constant beat, and a mixing or overlapping of meters. Of the modern composers who have been classified as minimalists, however, Adams tends more towards the Western classical tradition, evident in his employment of harmony, fluid tempos, and complex formal structures. *Short Ride* consists of a succession of highly rhythmic chordal passages, giving the impression of a single long-delayed cadence set against the persistent beat of the woodblock and outbursts of musical bullets from the percussion and brass sections. Exuberant and full of surprises, this quick joyride is far from the barebones minimalism of Philip Glass or Steve Reich.

Flying Dragon Concerto (2005)

**Gao Hong (b. 1964)
Orch. Gao Hong and Paul Dice**

Based on Gao Hong’s solo composition *Flying Dragon*, the concerto version was commissioned by the American Composers Forum’s Jerome Composers Commissioning Program and was premiered in July 2005 by the Minneapolis Pops Orchestra with Jere Lantz conducting.

Gao Hong was born in the Year of the Dragon. When she was three years old, her mother took her to a fortuneteller who revealed to them that because of the time and date she was born, she was a “flying dragon.” Her life has paralleled several of the characteristics associated with a flying dragon: constantly being on the move, never being settled, never being certain of where your home is, never knowing what your future will bring. Gao left her family at age twelve to become a professional musician and avoid the severe consequences of the Cultural Revolution. She has since moved farther and farther from her hometown—first to a neighboring province, then to Beijing, Japan, and finally the United States. In this concerto, she explores the mixed emotions and confusion brought on by her nomadic lifestyle that continues to leave her uncertain of what her future will bring. She reflects upon the constant struggles and challenges in a life filled with both hardship and happiness as well as a constant need for inner strength.

Flying Dragon Concerto was funded in part through Meet The Composer’s Creative Connections Program with the support of Jerome Foundation, ASCAP Foundation, Copland Fund, Ford Foundation, Vigil Thomson Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. This event was made possible in part by the Minnesota State Arts Board’s Art Learning grant.

—Program notes by Gao Hong

The Planets, Op. 32

Gustav Holst (1874 – 1934)

Mars, the Bringer of War
Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity

Throughout the Western classical tradition, musical inspiration has been drawn from a boundless variety of sources, and early 20th century English composer Gustav Holst looked to the sky to find his most famous muse, the planets. In 1914 he wrote, “As a rule I only study things that suggest music to me ... Recently, the character of each planet suggested lots to me.” The two movements presented today are taken from a larger seven-movement symphonic suite conceived between 1914 and 1916 about the astrological characters of the solar system. Each planet shares its name with a Roman god or goddess, and each possesses a distinct character that lends well to musical depiction. As the respective bringers of war and jollity, Mars and Jupiter are near polar opposites, showing the wide range of personalities with which Holst was working.

Written in the summer of 1914, just before the outbreak of World War I, the stern representation of *Mars* seems almost like a premonition of the disaster of battle that would soon unfold. Though it begins as an eerie murmur in the strings playing *col legno* (with the wood of the bow), it quickly builds into a persistent and inevitable force with a driving pulse that urges forward the incessant march-rhythm in 5/4 time. Winding chromaticisms, rising and falling melodic leaps, and dissonant harmonies all add to the distress, and Holst leaves no comfort in the bitter end other than the stable harmonic pillars of C and G that have maintained strength through the havoc of war.

In stark contrast with the terrors of combat, *Jupiter* ushers in sentiments of joy and excitement. The bouncing, staccato rhythms, constant syncopations, and striking metrical changes fill this movement with buoyancy and life. This movement has become one of the most recognizable in the orchestral repertoire because of its broad, sweeping central theme played in unison by the strings and horns. Several years later, Holst set the hymn *I vow to thee, my country* to this majestic tune which has maintained patriotic connotations ever since.

10-minute intermission

Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

I. Poco sostenuto – Vivace
II. Allegretto
III. Presto – Assai meno presto
IV. Allegro con brio

By the time Beethoven wrote his Seventh Symphony in 1812, he had suffered more than his fair share of hardships. He endured an unstable childhood, was forced to take care of his younger brothers at the age of 17, and most importantly, he was almost entirely deaf by this point in his career. It is evident in his *Heiligenstadt Testament* (written in 1802, several years before the conception of this symphony) that he was extremely close to committing suicide after the realization of his incurable hearing loss, but his passion for music ultimately kept him from

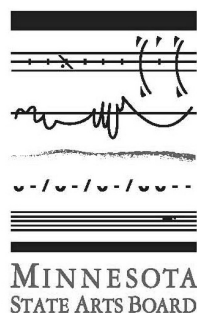
taking his own life. The Seventh Symphony, unlike the Fifth, does not deal directly with this intense struggle, but instead shows the triumphant outcome and a renewed sense of life in spite of the difficulties he faced.

Romantic composer Richard Wagner later dubbed this spirited work “the apotheosis of dance” because of its intense animation and a powerful rhythmic drive, which occurs throughout all four movements. The first movement begins with a weighted, stately *galant* introduction, and even here rhythm plays an important role in the rising sixteenth-note scales in the strings and the dotted melodies in the woodwinds. The portentous opening soon leads to a typical sonata form marked *vivace*, characterized by a constant gallop of dotted rhythms in a brisk 6/8 meter. Clever and exciting motivic repetition and thematic development show a clear influence of the composer’s earlier teacher, Joseph Haydn, who was a master of the monothematic sonata.

For the second movement in A minor, Beethoven avoided the Classical conventions of a slow song, and instead replaced it with an elegant *Allegretto*. Beautiful counter-melodies float above a prominent rhythmic ostinato that acts as a strong unifying device throughout this ponderous movement. This series of variations on a harmonic and rhythmic pattern passes like a regal procession tinged with melancholy. The propulsive scherzo that follows in the third movement plays out in the unexpected key of F Major, returning to the vibrant bustle of the opening movement. The embedded trio marked *Assai meno presto* is probably taken from an Austrian pilgrims’ hymn, and its soothing melody provides a peaceful respite among the accented iambic rhythms and intense dynamic contrasts of the scherzo.

In the *Allegro con brio* finale, the energy of the previous movement spills forth in an exuberant culmination of what has preceded. The near recklessness and sheer force of this movement led many of Beethoven’s contemporaries to believe that it was composed in a drunken fury, a compelling theory that has yet to be proven. Insistent syncopation and a shifting of accents in the winds and low strings underline the spring-loaded motive tossed around in the upper strings. The snap of dotted rhythms prevails once again, setting up the occasionally stormy, but mostly joyful mood in the bombastic and dizzying excitement of this victorious ending.

—Program notes for Adams, Holst, and Beethoven by Stephen Sokolouski, '11



This activity is made possible in part by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.



Gao Hong, Chinese musical prodigy and master of the pear-shaped lute, the pipa, began her career as a professional musician at age 12. She graduated with honors from China's premier music school, the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where she studied with the great pipa master Lin Shicheng. In both China and the U.S. Gao has received numerous top awards and honors, including First Prize in the Hebei Professional Young Music Performers Competition and an International Art Cup in Beijing. In 2005 Gao Hong became the first traditional musician to be awarded the prestigious Bush Artist Fellowship, and in 2008 she became the only musician in any genre to win three McKnight Artist Fellowships for Performing Musicians. The Minnesota State Arts Board has awarded her with an Artist Assistance Fellowship, two Artist Initiative Grants, and a Cultural Community Partnership grant. The Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation has also awarded her a USArtists International grant.

Gao has performed throughout Europe, Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, China, and the U.S. in solo concerts and with symphony orchestras, jazz musicians, and musicians from other cultures. She has performed at many major festivals worldwide. Her performances have included those at the Lincoln Center Festival; Carnegie Hall; the San Francisco Jazz Festival; the Smithsonian Institution; the Next Wave Festival; Festival d'Automne a Paris in Paris and Caen, France; the International Festival of Perth, Australia; and the Festival de Teatro d'Europa in Milan, Italy. Her performances of pipa concerti with symphony orchestras include several world, U.S., and regional premieres and performances with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Pasadena Symphony, Heidelberg (Germany) Philharmonic, the Louisville Orchestra, the Women's Philharmonic in San Francisco, the Portland (Maine) Symphony, and the Minneapolis Pops Orchestra among others. In addition, she performed with the Lincoln Center production of "The Peony Pavilion."

As a composer, she has received commissions from the American Composers Forum, Walker Art Center, the Jerome Foundation, Zeitgeist, Ragamala Music and Dance Theater, Theater Mu, Minneapolis Guitar Quartet, IFTP, Danish guitarist Lars Hannibal, and Twin Cities Public Television for the six-part series "Made in China." Meet the Composer Inc. in New York City has awarded her two Creative Connections grants, two MetLife Creative Connections grants and a Global Connections grant.

China's foremost music publication, "People's Music," wrote of Gao Hong that "like the famous Luoyang peony, she has gradually emerged as the best of all beautiful flowers ... her performance has extremely strong artistic appeal and belongs under the category of 'fine wine' ... the more you listen, the more beautiful it gets..."

THE ST. OLAF ORCHESTRA

STEVEN AMUNDSON, *CONDUCTOR* ~ TERRA WIDDIFIELD, *MANAGER*

VIOLIN

Taryn Arbeiter, *Rapid City, S.D.*
Jenny Asparro, *Lake Oswego, Ore.*
Greta Bauer, *Minneapolis, Minn.*
Lars Berggren, *Lindsborg, Kan.*
Madeline Brumback, *Blacksburg, Va.*
Ellen Hartford, *Stow, Mass.*
Lindsie Katz, *Boulder, Colo.*
Olivia Krueger, *Omaha, Neb.*
Lauren Kurtz, *Mankato, Minn.*
]Laurel Lynch, *Fairbanks, Alaska*
Emily Mullaney, *Gilbert, Iowa*
Graham Ransom, *Edina, Minn.*
Katarina Schmitt, *Naperville, Ill.*
Amanda Secor, *Fort Dodge, Iowa*
Arthur Sletten, *Osceola Wis.*
†† Ean Ulrich, *Owatonna, Minn.*

VIOLIN II

Sarah Aune, *Middleton, Wis.*
**Green Bouzard, *Waverly, Iowa*
Jared Brown, *Oak Park, Calif.*
~Janelle East, *Spicer, Minn.*
Elizabeth Fairfield, *DeKalb, Ill.*
McKinley Green, *Butler, Ohio*
Becca Hanson, *Minnetonka, Minn.*
Stephen Lee, *Delran, N.J.*
Sarah Marti, *Prior Lake, Minn.*
Catherine Monson, *Austin, Minn.*
Megan Peterson, *Grand Forks N.D.*
Colleen Schaeffle, *Anoka Minn.*
Hannah Sorrells, *Weatherville, N.C.*
Sonja Wermager, *Northfield, Minn.*
Katherine Wilhelm, *Barrington, R.I.*

VIOLA

Julie Asparro, *Lake Oswego, Ore.*
Abi Enockson, *Fargo, N.D.*
*Katie Fitzgerald, *Monument, Colo.*
Claire Folts, *Hershey Penn.*
Dayna Jondal, *Austin, Minn.*
Brittany Letcher, *West Lafayette, Ind.*
**Laura Menard, *Lexington, Ky.*
Anna Nelson, *Waukesha, Wis.*
Julia Ortner, *Bloomington, Minn.*
Hannah Stallkamp, *Gilbert, Ariz.*
Kyle Svingen, *Omaha Neb.*

CELLO

Ben Arbeiter, *Rapid City S.D.*
Lydia Bundy, *Azusa, Calif.*
Sara Cattanach, *Lake Elmo, Minn.*
Amy Chatelaine, *Owatonna, Minn.*
**Sarah Gingerich, *Conway, Ark.*
Beau Gray, *Fargo, N.D.*
Alexandra Mastny, *Stillwater, Minn.*
Jacqueline Scott, *Plymouth, Minn.*

Audrey Slote, *Meadville, Pa.*
Stephen Sokolouski, *Maplewood, Minn.*
Laura Zimmermann, *Racine, Wis.*

BASS

Evan Anderson, *Golden Colo.*
**Bayard Carlson, *Sioux Falls, S.D.*
Jonah Hacker, *Madison, Wis.*
Daniel Meyers, *Waverly, Iowa*
Andy Nail, *Bloomington, Minn.*
Kara Lynn Sajeske, *Elmhurst Ill.*

FLUTE

Sonia Funkenbusch, *Hudson, Wis.*
**Megan Makeever, *Bozeman, Mont.*
Cecilia Noecker, *St. Paul, Minn.*
Molly Schull, *Hayward, Wis.*

PICCOLO

Sonia Funkenbusch, *Hudson, Wis.*
Molly Schull, *Hawyard, Wis.*

OBOE

Jennifer Arnsporg, *Northbrook, Ill.*
◇ Megan Dvorak, *Hayward, Wis.*
Ashley Enke, *Omaha, Neb.*
**Lauren Seidel, *Minneapolis, Minn.*

CLARINET

**Aaron Harcus, *Minneapolis, Minn.*
Joe Sferra, *Toledo, Ohio*
Christopher Sherwood-Gabrielson,
Scandia, Minn.
Nicholas Wilson, *Apple Valley, Minn.*

BASS CLARINET

Christopher Sherwood-Gabrielson,
Scandia, Minn.

BASSOON

Anne Daily, *Anamosa, Iowa,*
**Josh John, *Beaverton, Ore.*
Conor Mackey, *St. Charles, Ill.*
▼Matthew West, *Bloomington, Ill.*

HORN

Amy Glasow, *Shoreview, Minn.*
Jordan Kling, *Ashland, Ore.*
Ellan Krubsack, *Maple Grove, Minn.*
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Kira Seidel, *Minneapolis, Minn.*
Andrew Watt, *St. Paul, Minn.*

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Neil Hulbert, *Tacoma, Wash.*
**Garrett Klein, *Port Orchard, Wash.*

Timothy McCarthy, *Brush Prairie,
Wash.*

Jaclyn Melander, *Mounds View, Minn.*

TROMBONE

Zach Gingerich, *Conway, Ark.*
**Benjamin Sink, *Manchester, N.H.*

BASS TROMBONE

Robinson Schulze, *Santa Monica,
Calif.*

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Chris Leslie, *Cincinnati, Ohio*

TUBA

Wesley Olson, *Minnetonka, Minn.*

PERCUSSION

Andrew Belsaas, *Rapid City S.D.*
Madeline Giordana, *Hudson, Wis.*
Neil Gleason, *Buffalo, Minn.*
**Eri Isomura, *Lauderdale, Minn.*
Alex Van Rysselberghe, *Lake Oswego,
Ore.*

SYNTHESIZER

Madeline Giordana, *Hudson, Wis.*
Emily Vomacka, *Kandiyohi, Minn.*

HARP

Joy Gunderson, *Phoenix, Ariz.*
Anna Hagens, *Madison, Wis*

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