
ST. OLAF ORCHESTRA
STEVEN AMUNDSON, *CONDUCTOR*

SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2019 | 3:30 P.M.

SKOGLUND AUDITORIUM

Program

Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman No. 6

Joan Tower (b. 1938)

Joan Tower is not only regarded as one of the most influential female composers, but one of the most important American composers still living today. In her 50 year career, she has left a unique and unrivaled mark on a musical canon dominated by men, with compositions for orchestra, chamber ensembles, solo instruments, ballet, and symphonic bands. Her music is heavily inspired by her childhood and adolescence in South America, which she credits for establishing her love of strong rhythms that frequently drive her works. Tower chose to move away from the restrictive musical style of the 1970s towards a less dissonant and more intuitive musical approach. She used this inspiration to pave her way through the post-WWII male-dominated musical sphere and is now considered a pioneer for other female composers.

Her most famous works are the collection of six *Fanfares for the Uncommon Woman*. Written between 1987 and 2014, the collection is often considered a feminist counterpart to Aaron Copland's famous *Fanfare for the Common Man*. Originally written for piano and later arranged for orchestra, the sixth fanfare was composed over a decade after the fifth. Like its predecessors, the sixth fanfare is dedicated to women who are "risk-takers and adventurers." With frequent meter changes, bombastic brass, repeated eighth note lines, and soaring string and wind melodies, *Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman No.6* might be more appropriately called an overture than a fanfare.

— Notes by Penelope Musto '21

Voyage for String Orchestra

John Corigliano (b. 1938)

John Corigliano is an eclectic composer whose works span the spectrum from tonal, neo-romantic lyricism to academic serialism. He has written many popular concerti and choral works that are performed often by major orchestras and choruses. Perhaps one of Corigliano's best known works is the *Ghosts of Versailles*, an opera combining almost every potential musical technique with a wide variety of characters and visual effects—fitting for Corigliano's first opera. It was first performed in 1991 at The Met in New York, the first opera premiered there since 1967.

Voyage for String Orchestra comes from Corigliano's early career, where he was primarily influenced by the likes of Copland, Barber, and Bernstein. This influence lends a lyrical and almost simple quality to Corigliano's string music. *Voyage* is an arrangement of Corigliano's 1971 composition *L'Invitation au Voyage*, for a *cappella* choir. The choral piece puts music to a poem of the same name by French poet Charles Baudelaire (translated by Richard Wilbur). The poem is rich in flowery language which depicts an Elysian world filled with dream-like scenes. The refrain from the poem, repeated after each stanza, reads: "There, there is nothing else but grace and measure, // Richness, quietness, and pleasure."

— Notes by William Beimers '20

Divertimento from Le baiser de la fée (A Fairy's Kiss)

Igor Stravinsky (1882 – 1971)

- I. *Sinfonia*
- II. *Danses Suisses*
- III. *Scherzo*
- IV. *Pas de deux*

Igor Stravinsky is one of the most well-known composers of the 20th century because of the many ways he revolutionized classical music, his diverse array of styles, and widespread appeal to performers and listeners. Much of his popularity stems from only a few pieces, most notably his trio of ballets from the early 1910s: *Firebird*, *Petrushka*, and *The Rite of Spring*. From

those works, Stravinsky pulled out sections and created orchestral suites as standalone works, as he did with *Divertimento* from *Le baiser de la fée*. The ballet *Le baiser de la fée* (*A Fairy's Kiss*) was written and premiered in 1928. The story is based on the Hans Christian Andersen tale *The Ice Maiden*, where a young man is marked at birth with a kiss from the ice maiden and is cursed the rest of his life. Throughout his romance with a young woman depicted in the ballet, the ice maiden makes various appearances and eventually ends the young man's life. This dark fairy tale uses themes that Stravinsky borrowed from Tchaikovsky, and the ballet as a whole was dedicated to Tchaikovsky. Stravinsky wrote, "I dedicate this ballet to the memory of Peter Tchaikovsky, identifying his Muse with the fairy. The ballet thus becomes an allegory. This Muse similarly branded him with her fatal kiss, whose mysterious imprint made itself felt in all the work of this great artist." It seems that Stravinsky looked up to Tchaikovsky as an artist, and by rearranging some of his pieces for piano and voice, Stravinsky honored Tchaikovsky's legacy.

The *Divertimento* takes music from four different sections of the ballet. The *Sinfonia* takes place at the beginning of the ballet, when the main character is first marked by the ice maiden. The main theme uses the melody of Tchaikovsky's Op. 54 No. 10. The music moves slowly throughout the movement, using smooth string textures and lyrical melody lines to create a sense of peace, but slowly building in intensity. The Tchaikovsky theme passes through various instruments until it reaches a dance-like section, which pushes unsteadily forward before crescendoing straight into the next movement. The second movement is marked *Danse Suisse*, and portrays a dance for the young man's bachelor party. Again, the first theme is taken from a Tchaikovsky piano piece, this time his Op. 10 No. 2. The horns and brass carry the main themes here, in a rollicking rhythmic dance. The *scherzo* is a whimsical journey marked by woodwind arpeggios and syncopated rhythms that reflect the mysterious nature of the ice maiden. Finally the *Divertimento* ends in the *Pas de deux*, which is comprised of three sections of a dance between the two lovers near the end of the ballet.

— Notes by William Beimers '20

***Flight*, Op. 45**

Andrew Cannestra (b. 1999)

(Premiere Performance)

The composer provided the following program notes:

Completed in June, 2018, *Flight* was inspired by a discussion I had with a friend about which orchestral pieces are most rewarding to listen to while taking off and landing while aboard an airplane. Eventually, a light bulb went off: I should write the perfect piece for both!

The opening evokes the sensation of sitting on a tarmac, waiting for the plane to start moving and take off, before eventually springing into action. Throughout the work, there is a sense of the anxiety some people feel while aboard airplanes. There is also a calmer section and another that evokes sudden turbulence. Finally, the plane safely lands to the passenger's great relief and joy.

This piece is dedicated to the St. Olaf Orchestra, with many thanks to Professor Amundson for his support and leadership.

A native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, **Andrew Cannestra** is a junior at St. Olaf, where he studies piano performance with Dr. Kent McWilliams, plays piano and celesta for the St. Olaf Orchestra, and collaborates extensively as both a collaborative pianist and a chamber musician. He has won numerous piano competitions, including MTNA in the Young Artist Performance division in the state of Minnesota, the Civic Music Association Young Artist Scholarship, and the Marilyn Caldwell Piano Solo award. Equally accomplished as a composer, notable performers of his compositions include the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, the St. Olaf Philharmonia, and the Artaria String Quartet. His music has also been featured in Peter Nelson's award-winning short film, *Intruder Man*. Outside of music, Andrew enjoys fishing, hiking, stargazing, and is a passionate baseball fan.

Danzón No. 2

Arturo Márquez (b. 1950)

Arturo Márquez was born into a musical family as the child of a mariachi musician and grandchild of a Mexican folk singer. Though he was one of nine children, he was the only sibling to go into music of any kind. He studied piano, violin, and trumpet until he began composing at age 16. He attended the Mexican Music Conservatory to study piano and music theory, and proceeded to study composition for another three years. Later, he received a Fulbright Scholarship and obtained his MFA in composition from California Institute of the Arts. Much of Márquez's music is influenced heavily by his father and grandfather, and he is a well-known master of blending musical styles seamlessly and convincingly. Most often featured in Márquez's music is Mexican "salon music," a Romantic style normally written for solo piano. This inspiration is clear in *Danzón No. 2*. From the beginning, the traditional Afro-Cuban clave rhythm is heard in the pizzicato strings and in the percussion. This distinctive rhythm is used as a backdrop for Mexican inspired melodies, first in the clarinet and subsequently passed around the orchestra. Márquez himself describes the piece's origins as follows:

The idea of writing the *Danzón No. 2* originated in 1993 during a trip to Malinalco with the painter Andrés Fonseca and the dancer Irene Martínez, both of whom are experts in salon dances with a special passion for the *danzón*, which they were able to transmit to me from the beginning, and also during later trips to Veracruz and visits to the Colonia Salon in Mexico City. From these experiences onward, I started to learn the *danzón*'s rhythms, its form, its melodic outline, and to listen to the old recordings by Acerina and his Danzonera Orchestra. I was fascinated and I started to understand that the apparent lightness of the *danzón* is only like a visiting card for a type of music full of sensuality and qualitative seriousness, a genre which old Mexican people continue to dance with a touch of nostalgia and a jubilant escape towards their own emotional world; we can fortunately still see this in the embrace between music and dance that occurs in the State of Veracruz and in the dance parlors of Mexico City.

The piece gained fame after esteemed conductor Gustavo Dudamel and the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela included it in their 2007 European and American tour. Since then, it has been called the unofficial national anthem of Mexico and has been performed by hundreds of orchestras worldwide. It is clear why the piece has gained such notoriety: *Danzón No. 2* has a unique energy that is incomparable. With frequent and sudden changes in tempo and dynamics, the music takes on a life of its own and transports listeners to the ballroom in Veracruz that inspired it.

— Notes by Penelope Musto '21