



Western Music

Don Wright Faculty of Music

WESTERN UNIVERSITY WIND ENSEMBLE *MERGING; OVERLAPPING; FLUCTUATING*

Friday, November 29, 2024
7:30 p.m., Paul Davenport Theatre
Dr. Colleen Richardson, *Music Director*

Tunbridge Fair (1951)

Walter Piston
(1894-1976)

Spheres (2010)

Ola Gjeilo
(b. 1978)

Variations On a Theme of Robert Schumann (1969)

Robert Jager
(b. 1939)

Rumpelstilzchen (2010)

- I. Spinning Straw into Gold
- II. Night (The Maiden's Lament)
- III. Rumpelstilzchen's Furiant (Moto Perpetuo)

Jess Langston Turner
(b. 1983)

Strange Humors (2006)

John Mackey
(b. 1973)

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PROGRAM NOTES

Considered one of the most influential teachers in American music of the twentieth century, **Walter Piston** was also renowned for his compositional skill in combining contemporary musical materials with new-classical counterpoint and form. Piston began his studies in art but switched to music after service in a Navy band in World War I, where he played saxophone. After graduating from Harvard University in 1924, he went to Paris to study with the great French teacher Nadia Boulanger. Upon his return in 1926, Piston joined the faculty of Harvard where he taught for 34 years, retiring in 1960.

Through his compositions, teachings, and extensive educational writings on composition, orchestration, and theory, he influenced a broad range of later composers, including Leonard Bernstein, Irving Fine and Daniel Pinkham. In describing his own works, Piston defined his goal as a composer as striking “the perfect balance between expression and form.”

Tunbridge Fair (1950), subtitled Intermezzo for Band, depicts one of Vermont’s oldest and most cherished events, the annual county fair at Tunbridge. The work is a jazz-influenced contrapuntal tour de force commissioned by the League of Composers at the suggestion of Edwin Franco Goldman and was premiered by the Goldman Band. Piston embraces both the contrapuntal patterns of Bach and the developmental practices of Mozart and Beethoven. The ragtime-like first theme captures the interaction of the crowd, while the lyrical second theme depicts the evening dancing at the fair.

Ola Gjeilo is an accomplished pianist and one of the most frequently performed composers in the choral world. Although Norwegian by birth, it is perhaps his adopted country of America that has influenced the composer’s distinctive soundworld the most. Having grown-up in a musically eclectic home listening to classical, jazz, pop, and folk music, it was only natural for Gjeilo to incorporate this broad background into his classical composition studies at the Juilliard School and the Royal College of Music, London. He is especially inspired by the improvisational art of film composer Thomas Newman, jazz legends Keith Jarrett and Pat Metheny, glass artist Dale Chihuly, and architect Frank Gehry. Currently, Gjeilo is a New York City-based full-time composer.

The Spheres is an evocative work adapted for wind band from the composer’s mass entitled *Sunrise* for choir and string orchestra. Built around a five-note theme, a fade-in-fade-out effect gives the piece a sense of floating in space.

Born in Binghamton, New York, **Robert Jager** received trumpet lessons from his father, and his first compositions were trumpet duets. In 1962, he joined the Navy’s music program, where he was initially assigned to teach theory. However, after winning the ABA Ostwald Award in 1964, Jager was reassigned as the Staff Arranger/Composer. He left the military in 1965 and earned his masters from the University of Michigan in 1968. Jager briefly taught at Old Dominion University before joining the faculty at Tennessee Tech University, Cookeville in 1971. In 2001, after thirty years of teaching, he retired from this position. To date, Jager has over 140 published compositions and his music is performed throughout North America, Europe, and Asia.

Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann was composed in 1967, while the composer was a graduate student at the University of Michigan. The theme used as the basis for the variations is the song *Fröhlicher Landman, Op. 68, No. 10*, written by the romantic composer Robert Schumann in 1848, and known to young piano students as *The Happy Farmer*.

Jager describes the variations as follows:

Theme, The Happy Farmer (also known as the “Red Wing Polka.”)

Variation I, Theme is juxtaposed throughout “solo” voices in a Haydn-esque fashion

Variation II, Flutes outline theme in scherzo-like style

Variation III, Free variation on rhythmic values

Variation IV, Melodic and intervallic variation

Variation V, Distortion of melodic line in rhapsodic variation

Variation VI, Rhythmic variation of theme

Jess Langston Turner, born in Greenville, SC in 1983, composes contemporary instrumental and choral music. He began his musical training with piano and trumpet lessons and in high school developed an interest in composition. Turner earned both bachelor's and master's degrees in trumpet performance from Bob Jones University. From 2008-2011 he attended the Hartt School of Music in Hartford, CT, where he earned a master's degree in composition and was named a Regent's Scholar. In May 2015 he completed a DMA in music composition at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. Turner's teachers have included Dwight Gustafson, Dan Forrest, Kenneth Steen, Robert Carl, Don Freund, Sven David Sandstrom, Aaron Travers, and P. Q. Phan. In addition, he has participated in master classes with prominent American composers Dan Welcher and Nancy Galbraith, as well as Pulitzer Prize-winning composers Michael Colgrass, Jennifer Higdon, William Bolcom, and Joseph Schwantner.

In 2010, Turner was named to the National Band Association's Young Composers Mentoring Project and received the 2010 Walter Beeler Memorial Prize for *Rumpelstilzchen*.

The image of a creepy little gnome who has the magical power to spin straw into gold was fascinating to me... Rumpelstilzchen is divided into three movements, each depicting a different part of the story. The first movement, "Spinning Straw into Gold," paints a portrait of Rumpelstilzchen clattering away at his spinning wheel. You will hear the wooden clicking and rattling of the spinning wheel, Rumpelstilzchen laughing to himself, as well as ominous undertones of his plan to steal the poor maiden's firstborn son. After gradually working himself up into a frenzy, Rumpelstilzchen manages to compose himself enough to complete his task before vanishing into thin air.

The second movement, "Night (The Maiden's Lament)" is a picture of the maiden's grief upon realizing that she must give up her firstborn son to Rumpelstilzchen in exchange for his gold-spinning services. A long, plaintive melodic line is passed among various solo instruments, gradually culminating in a mournful chorale as the grief-stricken maiden sings her sorrow into the night.

The final movement, "Rumpelstilzchen's Furiant (Moto Perpetuo)" describes Rumpelstilzchen's dance of fury after his plot is foiled by the maiden successfully guessing his name. This final movement is a technical tour de force for the entire ensemble as it paints the picture of Rumpelstilzchen dancing and whirling faster and faster until he flies out of the maiden's house on a cooking ladle, never to be seen again.

John Mackey holds degrees from the Juilliard School and the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied with John Corigliano and Donald Erb, respectively. Although he has written for orchestras (Brooklyn Philharmonic, New York Youth Symphony), theater (Dallas Theater Center), and extensively for dance (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Parsons Dance Company, New York City Ballet), much of his work for the past decade has been for wind ensembles, and his band catalog now receives annual performances numbering in the thousands.

Strange Humors represents another of Mackey's works (after [Redline Tango](#)) that has been transcribed for wind ensemble. The first version was a student piece for string quartet and djembe that Mackey wrote while pursuing his graduate degree at the Juilliard School. It was later adapted for use by the Parsons Dance Company, with choreography by Robert Battle. Its transcription came at the behest of Richard Floyd on behalf of the American Bandmasters Association. The piece represents a merging of musical cultures -- the modal melodies and syncopated rhythms of middle Eastern music with the percussive accompaniment of African drumming.

Program notes by Yiyuan Da

WESTERN UNIVERSITY WIND ENSEMBLE

Dr. Colleen Richardson, Music Director

Piccolo

Mackenzie Anderson
Sophia Brawn*
Yiping Zhang

Flute

Mackenzie Anderson
Sophia Brawn*
Chisa Shoji
Jada Viggers
Darren Lee Wo
JinYi (Jennie) Zhang
Yiping Zhang

Oboe

Ashlyn Black*
Pauline Dizon
Mateo Gomez

Bassoon

Wendi Cheng
Yaron Felter-Gonen*

Contra Bassoon

Oskar Martinez

Clarinet

Maria Con
Yiyuan Da
Justine Dennis*
Amy Dimitrov
Matthew Leung
Ryan Miller
Jerill Morales
Richard Yang

Bass Clarinet

Amy Dimitrov
Jerill Morales

Soprano Saxophone

Shah Kamal*
Dani McAfee

Alto Saxophone

Maddison Caswell
Shah Kamal*
Dani McAfee

Tenor Saxophone

Evan Cheng

Baritone Saxophone

Emmanuel Papastamos
Alex Rozenberg

Bass Saxophone

Alex Rozenberg

Trumpet

Nayli Deleon Kantule
Mitchell Edwards
Toshi Kawabe
Rex Mulder*
Meghan Reesor
Colin Spencer*
Holly Wilson

Horn

Chrysa Balaka*
Kai Church
Nate Longstreet
Kevin Rops

Trombone

Amy Jordaan*
John Lau
Max Zhang

Euphonium

Spencer tenHag
Samuel Boudreau
Raymond Wang

Tuba

Daniel Montaseri*
Michael Bagnall

Percussion

Quinn Jamieson* +
Ziyun Peng
Rebecca Selman
Alana Yabis Sibal
Kiran Steele
Manny Thomas

Piano

Brett Kingsbury

Guests

Justin Woong, clarinet
Clare Kneesch, clarinet

**Section Leaders
+Concertmaster*