



2023-2024 SEASON

JAYCE OGREN, MUSIC DIRECTOR



VENTANA

OCTOBER 7 & 8, 2023

SUNSET CENTER, CARMEL

Jayce Ogren, Music Director and Conductor

Joshua Roman, cello

Overture to *Ruslan and Ludmilla*
[running time 5']

Mikhail Glinka
(1804-1857)

Colonial Song [6']

Percy Grainger
(1882-1961)

Cello Concerto [25']

Mason Bates
(b. 1977)

I: Con moto-Grazioso-
Con moto

II: Serene

III: Léger

INTERMISSION [20']

Variations on a Shaker Melody [5']

Aaron Copland
(1900-1990)

Concerto for Orchestra [30']

Béla Bartók
(1881-1945)

I: Introduzione. Andante non
troppo-Allegro vivace

II: Giouco delle coppie.
Allegro scherzando

III: Elegia. Andante non troppo

IV: Intermezzo interrotto.
Allegretto

V: Finale. Presto

*The October concert will be rebroadcast on KAZU's HD2 Classical station on
October 28, 2023, and October 29, 2023, both at 4 PM.*

PROGRAM NOTES

By Dr. Alicia Mastromonaco
OCTOBER 7-8, 2023

VENTANA (Window)



The Ventana Wilderness part of the Santa Lucia Range in Los Padres National Forest, was established as part of the Endangered American Wilderness Act in 1978. It is named for the Ventana Double Cone peak which is said to have once had an arch that looked like a *ventana* (Spanish for “window”).

Like that geological *ventana*, this program provides a window into composers’ use of folk melodies, whether endemic to their country of origin, or as an imagined folk music of their homeland, as in Grainger’s *Colonial Song*. A 21st-century folk

vocabulary is found in the music of Mason Bates, who incorporates elements of American vernacular music, such as blues, jazz and techno in his lively Cello Concerto.

Overture to *Ruslan and Ludmilla*

Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857)



Russian composer Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka (1804-1857) was one of the first composers within his country to gain popularity and recognition as a classical composer, so much that he was named one of the most influential composers by the Mighty Handful as well as Tchaikovsky.

Glinka came from a noble background and had an extensive education in Russia and abroad. In St. Petersburg he studied with the Irish composer, John Field, and then Charles Mayer. He spent time in Italy where he studied composition with Francesco Basili in Milan, as well as in Berlin, where he studied composition with Siegfried Dehn. He also was deeply inspired by the Italian operas of Donizetti and Bellini and desired to do for his country’s musical oeuvre what those composers did for Italian opera.

Colonial Song

Percy Grainger (1882-1961)



George Percy Aldridge Grainger (1882-1961) was an Australian-American composer, pianist, and collector of folksongs. He was born in Victoria, Australia, and moved to Europe to pursue

his musical education on the piano in Frankfurt and then London. During his tours as a concert pianist, Grainger would collect folksongs on his phonograph, one of the earliest people to do so (starting in 1906). These folksongs would form the basis of, or at least the inspiration for, many of his future compositions.

Colonial Song was composed between 1905-1912, as the first of his "Sentimentals" series; this being the only composition. It was originally a piano piece written as a gift to his mother, Rose. Grainger wanted to write a melody that sounded as if it came from the people who colonized his homeland of Australia. He drew inspiration from collections of British folksongs, as well as the songs of the American composer, Stephen Foster. The piece is a folksong from Grainger's own musical imagination. *Colonial Song* was not well-received at first in England, with Sir Thomas Beecham famously remarking, "My dear Grainger, you have achieved the almost impossible! You have written the worst piece of modern times." However, Grainger wrote several arrangements of the piece, including one for military band, which has become quite a popular piece among wind bands in the United States. The version on this program is Grainger's orchestral arrangement.

When he returned to Russia, Glinka worked on his first opera, *A Life for the Tzar*, which was well-received. He then began on *Ruslan and Ludmilla* from 1837-42. He wanted Pushkin to write the libretto, unfortunately the young writer died an untimely death by duel.

"... he was named one of the most influential composers by the Mighty Handful as well as Tchaikovsky..."

So, he started composing without a libretto. Eventually he completed the opera with a few different librettists, and the work as a whole received a somewhat tepid response at first. The overture, however, is among Glinka's most famous and recognizable works. The blazing virtuosity of the string runs combined with the folk song interpolations make this work a showstopper.

Cello Concerto

Mason Bates (b. 1977)



Bay Area-based composer Mason Bates (b. 1977) has developed a compositional style known for pushing the boundaries between classical and electronic musics, for blurring the lines between genres, and developing a new symphonic folk style. In addition to working as a composer with major orchestras, Bates also spins records as DJ Masonic, and co-founded an immersive classical-music-meets-club-scene performance series, Mercury Soul, which presents classical music alongside DJ sets to audiences throughout the Bay Area.

The impetus for the cello concerto stemmed from a chance collaboration between Bates and cellist Joshua Roman. The two were paired together to improvise an electro-acoustic duo at Le Poisson Rouge in New York City at the inaugural YouTube Symphony Orchestra summit in 2009, where Roman was a soloist

and Bates was composer-in-residence. Bates wrote, “that shotgun wedding left me mesmerized at his unmatched musicianship and technique, and soon I was composing a fiendishly difficult solo work for him to premiere on his series at Town Hall. He played it from memory.” From there, Bates and Roman decided to collaborate on a concerto.

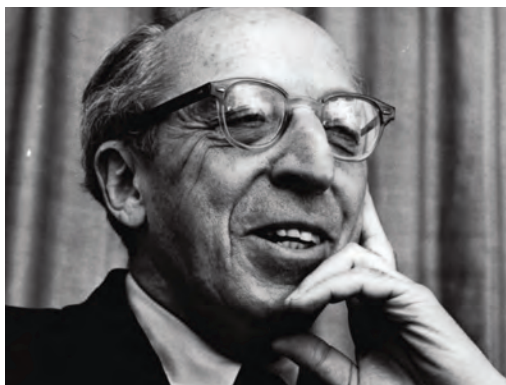
The cello concerto was commissioned by the Seattle Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and Columbus Symphony Orchestra, with funding from the Johnstone Fund for New Music. It premiered in December 2014 with Roman and the Seattle Symphony, conducted by Mirga Gražintytė-Tyla. In true Bates fashion, in addition to the extended virtuoso techniques for the cello, Bates employs his own vernacular. Like the other composers on this program, it is Bates’s version of 21st century American musical folk idioms. In this case, it is the music of electronic dance music, rock, blues, and jazz.

“Bates has developed a compositional style known for pushing the boundaries between classical and electronic musics ...”

Variations on a Shaker Melody

Aaron Copland

(1900-1990)



American composer Aaron Copland's (1900-1990) music has become synonymous with the American landscape, sometimes referred to as "American pastoral." His works are enduringly popular, and among the most popular is his Pulitzer Prize-winning ballet *Appalachian Spring*, originally written for Martha Graham's dance company between 1943-44. The piece has been arranged and excerpted multiple times, including into this version, *Variations on a Shaker Melody*, which is sometimes alternatively titled *Variations on Simple Gifts*.

The titular melody is "Simple Gifts," written by Joseph Brackett Jr. in 1848. The tune was not known outside of Shaker communities until well into the 20th century, but by 1996, the Music Educators National Conference noted "Simple Gifts" was a song that every American should know. The melody has been performed at three presidential inaugurations (Reagan in 1985, Clinton in 1993, and Obama in 2009). Listeners familiar with *Appalachian Spring* will note many similarities between the two pieces, but this version is the more distilled iteration of the now-famous tune that Copland brought from relative obscurity into the American musical canon.

Concerto for Orchestra

Béla Bartók

(1881-1945)



Hungarian composer Béla Bartók's (1881-1945) work as an ethnomusicologist influenced his compositions. The *Concerto for Orchestra* was one of the final works Bartók completed before his death in 1945.

In 1943 Bartók was suffering from leukemia and was approached by Conductor Serge Koussevitzky. He offered the composer \$1,000 from his Foundation to write a work in honor of his late wife. Bartók used sketches in which he eschewed the more standard 4-movement symphonic form in favor of a more palindromic 5-movement structure.

Bartók characterized the work as evolving from the "sternness of the first movement and the lugubrious death-song of the third, to the life-assertion of the last one." Bartók's interest in European peasant music is evident in the second movement, *Gioco delle coppie*. Bartók had compiled a book of Serbo-Croatian folksongs and was fascinated by the Dalmatian practice of paired singing of chromatic tunes in two parallel parts, often separated by the interval of a second or seventh. Thus, the movement's "game of pairs" was created, in which each instrument is paired off to play the cheeky rhythm.

The premiere took place in 1944 at Carnegie Hall, with Koussevitzky conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The American public enjoyed the work, although Bartók was persuaded to change the abrupt ending to a longer finale. Today the piece is one of Bartók's most popular works, and one of the most performed 20th century orchestral works.

DR. ALICIA MASTROMONACO

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL HORN

Program Notes Author



Alicia has played with the Monterey Symphony since 2007. She is also a member of the Carmel Bach Festival, Marin and California Symphonies and plays with orchestras across the Bay Area, including the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Opera, Berkeley Symphony, Oakland Symphony, Santa Rosa Symphony, New Century Chamber orchestra, and other regional orchestras. She is Lecturer of Horn at Sonoma State University.

A San Francisco native, Alicia began her music studies at age seven on the piano and sang in the San Francisco Girls Chorus before taking up the

horn. Alicia earned Bachelor of Music degrees in Horn Performance and Musicology from Boston University, then did graduate work at the Universität der Künste Berlin before returning to California to continue her studies. She earned a Master of Music in horn performance at University of California, Los Angeles, and a Master of Arts and PhD in Musicology from University of California, Santa Barbara.

Alicia lives with her husband, daughter, and two cats in El Cerrito where she enjoys the many beautiful hiking trails just outside their door, baking sourdough bread, and gardening.