

New Music from North and South America

PROGRAM NOTES

Up and Away (The Story of a Balloon).....Alyssa Morris

Up and Away is a musical depiction of the life of a Balloon. The balloon is brought to life, with effervescence, lightheartedness, and wonder. *Inhale/ Exhale* is a depiction of blowing up the balloon, watching it float, letting air out of the balloon and hearing the little squeal and sputter as it flies around the room. This movement also introduces Balloon's "light"-motif. This theme can be heard in measures 4 to 13. Listen for the "light"-motif throughout the piece.

Movement 2, *Life on a String*, is about teenage angst and rebellion. Balloon wants to prove that it has a mind and ideas of its own. So many times Balloon has felt that people want it to fit a certain mold, but Balloon just wants to be itself. This angst can be heard as each instrument presents an anti-conformist quotation of a passage that has become synonymous with what most people think that instrument is.

Movement 3, *Letting Go*, portrays the wisdom that comes with old age. This movement is Balloon's reflection at a life full of happiness, sorrow, love, learning, and meaning. *Letting Go* is a quiet resignation, knowing that we are not always in control of what happens in life. However, we are in control of what we choose to do with what we have been given.

Oblivion.....Astor Piazzolla

Argentine composer, bandoneon player, and arranger Astor Pantaleón Piazzolla, revolutionized the traditional tango. His new style, nuevo tango, integrated elements of jazz and classical music. *Oblivion*, one of Piazzolla's most popular tangos, became widely known through the soundtrack of Marco Bellocchio's film *Henry IV, the Mad King*. This is one of Piazzolla's most traditional tangos; less jazzy, chromatic, or dissonant than many of his other compositions. The simple melody presents a subtle, quiet, distant sadness.

Collision Etudes.....Alyssa Morris

Collision Etudes is based on six paintings by female American painters:

1. *Summertime* – Mary Cassatt
2. *City Landscape* – Joan Mitchell
3. *Jimson Weed* – Georgia O'Keeffe
4. *Rainbow* – Alma Thomas
5. *Autumn Leaves* – Georgia O'Keeffe
6. *My World is Not Flat* – Margarete Bagshaw

Georgia O'Keeffe is recognized as the mother of American modernism. She is known for her paintings of enlarged flowers. Her painting, *Jimson Weed*, offers a colorful close-up view of beautiful flowers. The third collision etude, *Jimson Weed*, is a collision of the whimsical sound of a French concert piece with a slow, winding Hungarian Harmonic Minor melody.

Alma Woodsey Thomas was an African-American Expressionist painter. She was an inspiring art educator, and strived to use her art to spread goodness and inspire others. The etude *Rainbow* is a compositional exploration of chromesthesia, a type of synesthesia in which pitches or key centers evoke an experience of color. The painting was placed on a loose timeline, each color block denoting the overall form of the etude. Since the painting is made up of 5 or 6 main color blocks (purple, blue, yellow paired with green, blue, red), the etude follows the form ABCBA'. This color mapping is combined with ethereal, cloud-like harmonic figures to create this "collision."

My World is Not Flat was painted by Native American modernist painter Margarete Bagshaw in 2011. The title is likely a nod to her grandmother's painting style. Bagshaw's grandmother, Pablita Velarde, was an accomplished painter in the Dunn style known as "flat painting." Bagshaw's painting style is full of layering, curves, angles, and dimensions, and her painting *My World is Not Flat* is a stunning example of her layered technique. The etude is a collision of multiphonic sounds depicting an "un-flat" world, and a Pueblo Dance Song that returns many times throughout the etude.

Demented Dances.....Craig Weston

*Program notes provided by composer

For Oboe, Violin, Cello, and Piano.

My goal in this piece was to create a light-hearted set of concert pieces based on very familiar dance forms. Rhythm is the essence of dance music, of course, so each movement takes the rhythmic structure of its dance type as its primary point of departure. The biggest difference in the three movements is how far they depart from the traditional rhythmic structure. The first movement, Tango, departs the most radically, with the level of metric chicanery reducing with each movement, until the final Mambo, which actually plays it fairly straight.

The Tango takes the 3+3+2 rhythmic pattern of a modern stylized Tango and branches off from there, with the vast majority of the rhythmic variation taking the form of extension of that pattern, to 3+3+3+2, 3+3+3+2+2, and so on, always involving some number of long beats (the 3s) followed by some number of short beats (the 2s). In the most extreme this process of extension reaches 3+3+3+3+3+2+2+2, but it always makes its way back to the original tango pattern.

The Waltz maintains as nearly inviolable the familiar "boom-chuck-chuck" three-beat pattern. (It wouldn't be a waltz if it didn't!) There is some room to play with the relative length of the three beats of some measures, though.

The Mambo is actually a completely authentic application of the clave rhythmic concept which is the core rhythmic principle of that music. The clave rhythm idea already has a "two side" and a "three side": the principals of rhythmic asymmetry which are the engine of my rhythmic method, so I was happy to leave it un-messed-around-with. Dancers familiar with the steps of the Mambo could actually spontaneously dance to this one in the familiar way—that would be a little too much to ask with the first two movements.

Oboe Concerto.....Lukas Foss

German-American composer Lukas Foss wrote his Oboe Concerto in 1948 for American oboist and pedagogue Whitney Tustin. This concerto is an example of Lukas Foss's neo-classical style. In the first and third movements, Foss fits angular melodies into traditional music forms. The beautiful second movement of this concerto is based on a Sicilian folk song. The movement features a simplistic statement of the theme first in an opening clarinet solo (heard on piano tonight), and later is embellished and ornamented by the oboe. The concerto is also cyclical. It begins with a dramatic entrance in the oboe's upper range, chromatically and angularly cascading down two-octaves. The same dramatic figure returns at the beginning of the third movement, this time beginning in the lower range and making a nearly two-octave ascension.