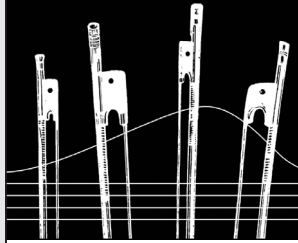


BLUE HILL
CONCERT
ASSOCIATION

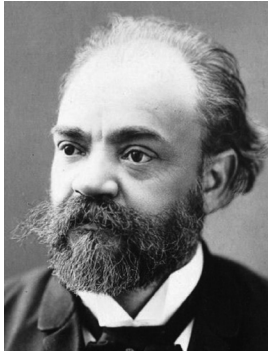


42 WINTERS OF
CHAMBER MUSIC
1978 - PRESENT

AIZURI QUARTET

Sunday, February 23, 2020

Program notes by Arnold Berleant



Cypresses (selections)

Antonín Dvořák
(1841- 1904)

quartets, piano trios (the “Dumky” is especially popular), a piano quartet and a piano quintet are frequently performed today.

Dvořák was a great melodist, and it is appropriate to recognize the continual influence of song in his early use and return to it in *Cypresses*. This is twelve short movements taken from a set of 18 love songs that he had originally composed in 1865. Returning to these late in life, Dvořák turned them into “songs without words,” arranging them for string quartet. Their long lyrical melodic lines replace the vocal line, while the accompanying textures of the other strings suggest the mood of the original text. The songs were originally called, “Echoes of Songs,” a sensibility that Dvořák seems to have returned to in this adaptation.



- I. Old Folk Song
- II. The Legend of the Last Ship
(and Other Collective Memories)
- III. Estonian Grandmother Superhero
- IV. Variations on a Somewhat Old Folk Song

Lembit Beecher's *These Memories May Be True* is a series of musical poems on elements of Estonian culture that his grandmother passed down to him. The outer movements are settings of folk songs, while the inner movements evoke two of his grandmother's

1. I know that on my love to thee
2. Death reigns in many a human breast
3. When thy sweet glances on me fall
4. Never will love lead us to that happy goal
5. The old letter in my book
6. You are my glorious rose
7. I wander oft past yonder house
8. In deepest forest glade I stand
9. Thou only dear one, but for thee
10. There stands an ancient crag
11. Nature lies peaceful in slumber and dreams
12. You ask why my songs

Antonín Dvořák was a Czech romantic nationalist best known for his Slavonic Dances and his Symphony No. 9, “From the New World,” which he wrote in 1893 during an extended stay in America. But Dvořák also composed music in all the forms in common use, including chamber music. His string



These Memories May Be True

Lembit Beecher
(b. 1980)

dramatic and rambunctious stories of escape during WWII. Beecher writes, “This piece is a little like the scattered image of Estonia that I had while growing up, filtered through many layers of retelling, and touched by a sense of nostalgia, a sense of something beautiful that has been lost in the wash of time.”

Born to Estonian and American parents, Lembit grew up under the redwoods in Santa Cruz, California, and has since lived throughout the U.S. and in Berlin, earning degrees from Harvard, Rice and the University of Michigan. This varied background has made him particularly sensitive to place, ecology, memory, and as a composer he is noted for his collaborative spirit and ingenious interdisciplinary projects. Lembit is currently the composer-in-residence of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, having previously served a three-year term as the inaugural composer-in-residence of Opera Philadelphia in collaboration with Gotham Chamber Opera and Music-Theatre Group.



Folk Songs (selections)

Komitas Vartabed
(1869-1935)

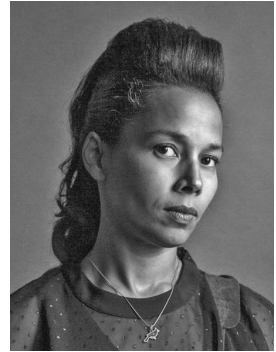
1. Chinar Es (Tall as the Poplar Tree)
2. Hoy Nazan Im (Oh, My Nazan)
3. Kroonk (The Crane)
4. Akh, Maral Jan (Ah, Dear Maral)
5. Dele Yaman
6. Shogher Jan (Dear Shogher)

Komitas Vartabed was an Armenian priest, musicologist, composer, arranger, singer, and choirmaster who is considered the founder of the Armenian national school of music. One of the pioneers of ethnomusicology, he collected and transcribed over 3,000 pieces of Armenian folk music, of which only around 1,200 have been preserved. Komitas is credited with creating the basis for a distinctive national Armenian musical style



A native of North Carolina, **Rhiannon Giddens** is a musician whose career, broad in its musical genres, is dedicated to uplifting the voices and stories that have been systematically erased from American music. As both a composer and a performer, Giddens asks us to confront the ways we are culturally conditioned to avoid talking about America's history of slavery, racism, and misogyny. A graduate of Oberlin Conservatory where she studied opera, Giddens went on to become a founding member of the Grammy Award winning Carolina Chocolate Drops where she was the lead singer, fiddle player, and banjo player. Recently called a "musical polymath" by the NY times, Giddens was a 2017 recipient of the MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship.

This song (arranged for string quartet by Jacob Garchik) was inspired by a 19th-century advertisement for a 22-year-old female slave whose baby was also available for sale "at the purchaser's option." Giddens imagines the interior world of a slave who defines her homeland as her soul, the only thing out of reach to her captors.



***At the
Purchaser's
Option***

**Rhiannon Giddens
(b. 1977)**



***String Quartet
'Voces Intimae' in
D minor, op. 56***

**Jean Sibelius
(1865-1957)**

1. Andante - Allegro molto moderato
2. Vivace (A major)
3. Adagio di molto (F major)
4. Allegretto (ma pesante)
5. Allegro

Jean Sibelius's *Voces Intimae* was written during a period of psychological crisis and isolation in his rural home "Ainola." His music during this period began to shift from the grand optimistic expression of Finnish nationalism that dominated his youth to something more dark and personal. In the allegro finale this is transformed into a virtuosic display with a distant sense of folk fiddling. This quartet reveals a dark side to Sibelius, a more introspective and intense Sibelius than we may have expected. At the same time, the writing is strong and confident.