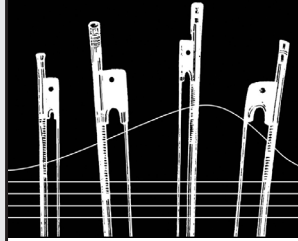


**BLUE HILL
CONCERT
ASSOCIATION**

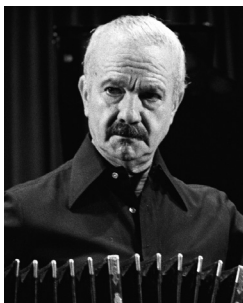


**FINE CHAMBER MUSIC
SINCE 1978**

KENARI QUARTET

Sunday, January 23, 2022

Program notes by Connie Mayo



Michelangelo '70

Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

Arr. Bob Eason (b. 1988)

Astor Piazzolla is celebrated as the creator of 'nuevo tango,' a musical style that fuses elements of classical music and jazz with traditional tango. Born in Argentina to Italian immigrants, he spent his childhood in New York's lower east side, soaking up the exciting jazz scene, studying classical piano and bandoneon and hearing tangos his father listened to incessantly. On returning to Argentina he pursued his

dream to be a classical composer, studying with Ginastera, then Boulanger in Paris. It was Boulanger who encouraged him to incorporate tango into his compositions.

Michelangelo '70 was written for Piazzolla's own Quinteto Nuevo Tango, an ensemble of bandoneon, bass, guitar, violin and piano. Named for the nightclub in Buenos Aires where the band often played, the piece first appeared on their 1986 album Tango: Zero Hour. It is an intense, dynamic tango with aggressive, jagged rhythms centered on a repeated three note theme that builds steadily and relentlessly toward its finale.



A Schumann Bouquet

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Arr. William Bolcom (b. 1938)

Schumann was a mature composer when he wrote the forty-three imaginative character pieces in Album for the Young. Pianos had become common in middle class German households, and there was increased demand for "Hausmusik," or music for playing at home. Aware that the piano music available for his young daughters to play was of poor quality, he wrote and published this volume of children's pieces from

the perspective of a child. His wife Clara said that her husband, "translated everything he saw, read and experienced into music and these pieces were taken directly from our family life." The collection transformed attitudes about music education and piano pedagogy in particular and launched a new genre of piano literature - programmatic music written specifically for children.

William Bolcom plucked six delightful pieces from Schumann's Album for the Young and arranged them for saxophone quartet. He writes, "I have loved Schumann's music since boyhood, not only the major piano works like Carnaval, Humoreske, and Kreisleriana but also the many modest short pieces. Album for the Young, dating from 1848, is an often overlooked rich source. Even the technically easy opening pieces are full of poetry, and the interpretive challenges in some of the later ones are as profound as in Schumann's larger works. These are not just teaching pieces without depth, and I suspect the major difference between the Album and most music intended for teaching is the presence of that depth."



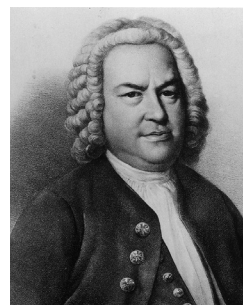
Quantum Shift

Mischa Zupko (b. 1971)

The Kenari Quartet describes this work as "an 8' virtuosic powerhouse of a piece that our quartet commissioned from the composer through leading a consortium along with our colleagues in several fantastic saxophone quartets. The work is inspired by a component of quantum theory in physics, where electrons within an atom can quickly jump between discrete energy levels, i.e. orbits, surrounding the atom's nucleus. While the scientific details of this phenomenon might

be tough for the layman to understand, the music of Quantum Shift takes this basic concept and translates it into a high-velocity work for saxophone quartet, characterized by sprightly oscillating motifs that constantly transition between varying states of texture, dynamic, tempo, and gesture. Put simply, the piece can be thought of as a window into the sporadic lives of four electrons—in this case, the 'Kenari Electrons'—interacting ceaselessly amongst one another in their subatomic world."

Mischa Zupko is an award winning Chicago-based composer, pianist and professor of music at Chicago's DePaul University.



Excerpts from

***Goldberg Variations* BWV 988**

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Arr. David Maslanka (1943-2017)

A monument of keyboard literature, this work of intricate, elegantly layered counterpoint was written in 1741 for two manual harpsichord. Its basis is an aria followed by thirty variations. The bass line presented in the aria is repeated throughout all variations, providing the harmonic structure, as in a passacaglia. The variations are divided into ten groups of

three, each group containing a canon, a dance and a toccata. Extraordinary diversity of style and emotional content exist between the variations which all flow from tonic to dominant in their first half, then back to the tonic in the second.

About his 2010 transcription for saxophone quartet, David Maslanka wrote, "I have done a straight transcription of the entire Goldberg Variations following the keyboard edition of Hans Bischoff (Kalmus). All ornamentation has been carefully written out, and I have raised the key to A-flat from the original G to make more congenial fingerings for saxophones. The effect of "opening up" the original keyboard texture to four saxophone voices is startling and quite good. Goldberg Variations is a lot of music, and the requirement to learn it all, and then shape a performance, is daunting. However, this is some of the best music by a great composer, and every bit of effort toward mastering it will be repaid a thousand-fold."



Short Stories

Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962)

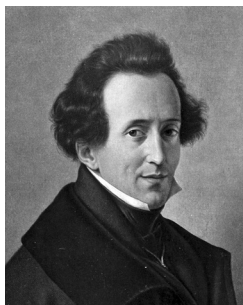
Pulitzer Prize and three time Grammy Award winner Jennifer Higdon, whose musical style has been called “neo romantic,” is a major figure in contemporary classical music. She offers a description of three selections from her work *Short Stories*:

“Lullaby” - This movement was originally written as a work for mezzo, flute, and piano, but I kept hearing it as a saxophone quartet in my head. It is a lullaby whose lyrical qualities seem to

lend itself to the saxophone very well.

“Chase” - A fast movement with much energy and tension, this is a running game that could be through any street, anywhere; where pursuers and prey sometimes come very close to catching up with each other, and when they do, they rough and tumble before sprinting off again.

“Splashing the Canvas” - Inspired by Jackson Pollock, an artist who splashes paint upon a canvas in a wild and uncontrolled manner, building up layers and constantly changing the resulting structure. Through this piece, many ideas are presented and are thrown about and layered. At the beginning of the movement it takes longer for the ideas to be stated, but as the piece progresses, the themes come back quicker and quicker as if the canvas were building into thick layers of overlapping ideas and becoming more complex.



Capriccio Op. 81, No. 3

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) / Arr. Bob Eason (b. 1988)

The *Capriccio* in e minor, written in 1843 for string quartet and published after Mendelssohn's death, is a mature work composed of two distinct and contrasting sections. It begins with a lyrical melody sung by the soprano, supported by gently rocking accompaniment. Following a brief recitative, it launches into an impassioned, virtuosic fugue in which the musical figures are tossed between the four parts with fervent intensity.



Mountain Roads

David Maslanka (1943-2017)

Maslanka, whose music is said to have a uniquely American sound, was a prolific composer of music for wind ensembles. He spent many years studying the 371 chorales of J. S. Bach, one at a time. *Mountain Roads*, which follows the form of a baroque cantata, uses two Bach chorale melodies as themes. “Alle menschen müssen sterben” (All men must die) is woven throughout all but one section. “Wo soll ich fliehen” (Where shall I run to) appears in the Overture and is presented fully in the second movement.

The title *Mountain Roads* comes from a dream Maslanka had while writing the piece. “In it I was part of a work crew making new roads in a high mountain country. It was springtime, the weather was clear, sunny and comfortable, although there was still snow on the ground. The effect of the place was exhilarating as only mountain wilderness can be. It seemed to me that the dream was a beautiful metaphor for new life and new spiritual opening.”