TWENTY-SIXTH SEASON
THIRD CONCERT

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PRESENT THE

Empire Brass

Rolf Smedvig - trumpet
Timothy Morrison - trumpet
David Ohanian - French horn
Scott A. Hartman - trombone
Samuel Pilafian - tuba

Wednesday, December 4, 1985

Hamman Hall 8:00 P.M. Rice University
PROGRAM

Our thanks to Dr. and Mrs. Grady Hallman whose generosity has made tonight’s program possible.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1985

Renaissance Brass:
Canzona Bergamasca ............................................ Samuel Scheidt
Canzona on a French Song ...................................... Scheidt

Selections from the Music of Johann Sebastian Bach:
Aria from Cantata No. 208, “Sheep May Safely Graze”
Sinfonia from Cantata No. 209
Chorale from Cantata No. 140 “Sleepers Wake”
Duet from Cantata No. 146, “My Spirit be Joyful”
Chorale from Cantata No. 147, “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring”

Horn Quintet in E flat major, K. 407 .................. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Allegro
Andante
Rondo: Allegro

Music of the French Impressionists:
Prelude from Suite Bergamasque ....................... Claude Debussy
The Girl with the Flaxen Hair, from
Préludes, Book I ........................................ Debussy
Dance Suite:
Piece en forme de Habanera
Valses nobles et sentimentales .............. Ravel

Overture to the “Royal Fireworks Music” ........... George Frideric Handel

INTERMISSION

Return of the Empire ....................................... Ira Taxin
Excerpts from “Scenes from Childhood” 1945 ........ Earl Kim
Suite from Porgy and Bess .............................. George Gershwin
Suite from West Side Story .............................. Leonard Bernstein
Polestar March ............................................ Peter Maxwell Davies

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The Empire Brass Quintet has set international standards with performances and recordings of music from Bach and Handel to Bernstein and Gershwin. Since winning the Naumberg Chamber Music Award, they have toured Europe, the Far East and have appeared throughout the United States in recital and with the nation’s symphony orchestras. The Empire Brass has always been in the vanguard of new music performance, and it has commissioned more than 50 works from leading composers. Their superb musicianship and infectious enthusiasm, as well as their 20 recordings and national television appearances have established them as one of America’s premiere brass ensemble.

PROGRAM NOTES

Schütz, Schein, and Scheidt (1587-1654) are the three most famous German composers of the early Baroque. Scheidt is best known for his instrumental music. He was working as the court Kapellmeister of Halle during 1621, when this canzona was written. The canzona, a precursor to the sonata, is a sectional piece emphasizing textural contrast and variety.

Although J. S. Bach (1685-1750) composed more than 300 cantatas, only about 200 have been preserved. Most of the cantatas were composed for performance during the church service, although a number were written for important secular occasions.

Cantata 208, “My chief delight is in the sporting chase,” was probably written in 1713 for a birthday celebration. It consists of 15 movements, including the famous pastorale aria “Sheep may safely graze,” originally scored for soprano and two recorders.

Cantata 140, “Sleepers wake!” was written in 1731. The structural foundation of Bach’s cantata is a chorale, the three stanzas of which are used as the basis for the opening movement, the well-known central movement (which was later transcribed and published as an organ work), and the final movement.

Cantata 147 was written in 1716 but was later expanded. In its final form, it uses a variety of texts and two stanzas of the chorale, “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring.” This was one of Bach’s favorite chorales; he used it in three cantatas and in the St. Matthew Passion.
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PROGRAM NOTES (continued)

The Quintet for horn, violin, two violas and cello by Mozart (1756-1791) was written for the Salzburg horn-player Ignatz Leutgeb at the end of 1782. Leutgeb, like Mozart, was in Vienna at the time, where he supplemented his musical income by opening a cheese shop with a loan from Mozart’s father. Leutgeb was the frequent victim of Mozart’s pranks, and the quintet reflects their relationship. The first and third movements take an amusing look at the limitations of the 18th century horn. The second movement is more serious and features a beautiful duet between the horn and, in the original, the violin. Mozart’s quintet aspires to be a horn concerto; Mozart even provided the horn player with the option of performing cadenzas.

Debussy (1862-1918) composed the Suite Bergamasque for piano in 1889. The Prelude is written in a virtuosic, improvisatory style reminiscent of the 18th century prelude. The title of the suite is associated with commedia dell’arte figures. It was also used by Paul Verlaine in the poem “Clair de lune,” which provided the name for another movement in the suite. Debussy took the inspiration for “The Girl with the Flaxen Hair,” one of the 12 Piano Preludes published in 1910, from a poem with the same title by Leconte de Lisle.

Ravel’s (1875-1937) “Vocalise in the form of a Habanera,” written in 1907, was derived from the finale of his opera, L’Heure Espagnole. The habanera, an extremely popular dance during the early years of the 20th century, was the precursor of the tango.

The Valses nobles et sentimentales, originally for piano, were composed during 1911. In it, Ravel attempted to write “a chain of valse in the style of Schubert.” The original score was prefaced by a quote from Henri de Régnier, “The delicious and ageless pleasure of a useless occupation.” Ravel orchestrated the waltzes in 1912 and used them as music for the ballet Adelaide, or the Language of Flowers.

Handel (1685-1759) wrote the Royal Fireworks Music to accompany a fireworks display celebrating the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. The celebration, on April 27, 1749, came to a premature conclusion when the platform to which the fireworks were attached caught fire. Handel’s music was performed in a concert setting a month later with added string instruments doubling the original brass and woodwind parts. The overture, which prepared the audience for the fireworks to come, is in the French style. A majestic, processional-like opening is followed by a section featuring triple-meter fanfare figures.

Earl Kim (1920-), a student of Sessions and Schoenberg, has taught at Princeton and Harvard. He has been awarded a number of important prizes and commissions, including the Prix de Paris, the 1971 Brandeis University Creative Arts Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Koussevitsky Foundation commission.
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George Gershwin (1898-1937) referred to *Porgy and Bess* as "folk opera—opera for the popular theatre, with drama, humor, song, and dance." The opera, based on a play by DuBose Heyward, was composed during 1934 and 1935. Although originally staged as a "grand" opera, *Porgy and Bess* has also been staged as a musical. The score includes a number of hit tunes.

Leonard Bernstein's (1918-) musical style has been described as "out of Stravinsky by Copland." *West Side Story*, which opened in 1957, combined the music of Bernstein with lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and choreography by Jerome Robbins. The end result was a fresh look at the American musical. Bernstein incorporated Latin-American dance rhythms, jazz elements and pop music techniques into this contemporary setting of the Romeo and Juliet story.

Peter Maxwell Davies (1934-) studied at Royal Manchester College, Manchester University, and with Sessions at Princeton during the early 1960's. He returned to Great Britain during 1967 and, since 1970, has lived in Orkney. One unifying feature in his numerous compositions has been the use of techniques, forms, and styles borrowed from early music. His compositions from the late 1960's reflect an emphasis upon individual, theatrical gestures. His recent works are more lyrical and are often based on Scottish or Orcadian material.

*Program Notes by Nancy Gisbrecht Bailey*
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