

Houston Friends of Music



the Shepherd School of Music

PRESENT

EMPIRE BRASS

Rolf Smedvig, *Trumpet*

Jeffrey Curnow, *Trumpet*

Eric Ruske, *French Horn*

Scott A. Hartman, *Trombone*

J. Samuel Pilafian, *Tuba*

Wednesday, December 5, 1990

8:00 P.M.

Hamman Hall

Rice University

31st Season

FOURTH CONCERT

Houston
Friends
of Music



the
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School
of Music

PRESENT

EMPIRE BRASS

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| Procession of the Nobles, from Mlada..... | NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV |
| Polovtsian Dance, from Prince Igor..... | ALEXANDER BORODIN |
| Dance of the Comedians, from the Bartered Bride..... | BEDRICH SMETANA |
| Nacht Poema (Night Poems)..... | PR. VAN EECCHAUTE |
| Prelude, Theme & Variations..... | GIOACCHINO ROSSINI |
| Carmen Fantasy..... | GEORGES BIZET |
| Wedding Dance and Troika, from Lieutenant Kije..... | SERGEI PROKOFIEV |

INTERMISSION

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|--|---------------------------------|
| Trio Sonata No. 2..... | JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH |
| <i>Allegro, Andante, Allegro</i> | |
| Sabre Dance, from Gayane..... | ARAM KHACHATURIAN |
| Arabian Dance, from The Nutcracker..... | PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY |
| Pavane, Op. 50..... | GABRIEL FAURE |
| Boy Meets Horn..... | EDWARD KENNEDY "DUKE" ELLINGTON |
| Jungle Nights..... | EDWARD KENNEDY "DUKE" ELLINGTON |
| M-TV for Jerry (Jerome Robbins), from Dance Suite for Brass Quintet..... | LEONARD BERNSTEIN |
| A Christmas Festival..... | LEROY ANDERSON |

The Empire Brass is represented by Columbia Artists Management

Empire Brass is the Quintet-in-Residence at Boston University.

Telarc, Angel/EMI and CBS/Sony Records

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All arrangements performed during this concert are the property of and have been written by the Empire Brass, except where noted.

Photographing and sound recording are prohibited.

We further request that audible paging devices not be used during performances. Paging arrangements may be made with ushers.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Procession of the Nobles, from *Mlada*

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV (1844-1908)

Following the paths laid by Berlioz and Liszt, Rimsky-Korsakov evolved into one of the best and most imaginative orchestrators the world has known. His opera-ballet *Mlada* was conceived as a collaborative effort by Rimsky-Korsakov, Cui, Borodin, and Mussorgsky on a commission from the director of the Imperial theaters in 1872; the enterprise came to nothing and the collaborating composers later used their music in other projects. In 1899, Rimsky-Korsakov decided to revise and extend the original libretto, and composed a complete *Mlada* of his own. Although *Mlada* has failed to hold a place in the standard repertoire, the "Procession of the Nobles" has remained a popular excerpt in various orchestral and wind ensemble arrangements.

Polovtsian Dance, from *Prince Igor*

BORODIN (1833-1887)

Borodin was one of the composers, collectively known as "The Five," who banded together in St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) to champion Russian musical forms and style; the rest of "The Five" were Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Balakirev and Cui. The opera *Prince Igor* is based on the defeat of the Tartars of Polovtsky by Prince Igor of Novgorod in 1185. The "Polovtsian Dances" occur in the second act, as the Tartar Khan honors his royal captive, Prince Igor, with entertainment provided by his warriors, singers and dancing slave girls. The music abounds in Oriental and Russian themes.

Dance of the Comedians, from *The Bartered Bride*

SMETANA (1824-1884)

Smetana's comic opera *The Bartered Bride* was first performed at Prague in 1866; after more than a century, it remains the most brilliantly successful of Bohemian operas. The story deals with the love affair of two Bohemian villagers, whose marriage is opposed by the girl's father. The "Dance of the Comedians" is a distinctively national dance of furious and irresistible rhythm and takes place during the festivities in connection with the wedding of the young couple who finally overcome the father's opposition.

Prelude, Theme and Variations

ROSSINI (1792-1868)

No other composer in Gioacchino Rossini's generation enjoyed the amount of prestige, wealth, popular acclaim or artistic influence that belonged to this composer. In opera composition he was at the center of Italian operatic life, setting new standards against which other composers were to be judged. He left an incredible legacy to the operatic repertoire with such masterpieces as *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *L'italiana in Algeri*. Rossini's output also includes many sacred vocal works and a few purely instrumental pieces composed, some early and others late, in his career. The early *Andante e tema con variazioni* was originally written for wind quintet in 1812. Rossini's originality, as well as his dramatic and melodic phrasing foreshadowing his own operatic style, are very much in evidence here.

Carmen Fantasy

BIZET (1838-1875)

The opera *Carmen* was premiered at the Opera Comique, Paris, in 1875 and was met with a cold, critical reception. Bizet was deeply saddened by this turn of events and died only three months after the premiere, never knowing that his opera would soon capture the hearts of opera lovers. The work soon became a staple of the repertoire and has remained as such to this day.

Wedding Dance and Troika, from *Lieutenant Kije*

PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

Upon his return to his native Russia in 1933, after fifteen years in Europe, it was Prokofiev's desire to embark on a composition employing a Russian theme. The opportunity arose in the form of a commission to write the music for the film, *Lieutenant Kije*. The film tells the story of how, through an error on a military report, the Tsar was led to believe in the existence of a Lieutenant Kije. (If this mistake had happened in an English speaking country, our fictional character might have been called "Lt. Whatchamacallit.") To avoid embarrassment, and possible execution, the courtiers invented a whole life history for the non-existing officer.

Prokofiev's spirited music follows the "hero" from his supposed birth to his convenient death in the battlefield. The score is replete with musical irony and a combination of sentiment and satire. To endow the fictitious heroic officer with human dimensions, he is attributed with romantic impulses, leading to a grand wedding; here, the music consists of a march exhibiting mock ceremonial pomp, and a song portraying the guests' extroverted gaiety. This is followed by the Troika, describing a ride on the national horse-drawn sleigh; the melody is provided by an old Russian tavern song, to which Prokofiev adds his typical touches of humorous grotesqueries.

(continued)

PROGRAM NOTES *(continued)*

EMPIRE BRASS

Trio Sonata No. 2

J. S. BACH (1685-1750)

This beautiful Sonata is a vivid example of sparkling contrapuntal writing balanced by the long lyric phrases of the slow second movement. The bright festive sound of brass is brilliantly displayed in this modern arrangement of Bach's music. The instruments that make up the brass quintet had not yet taken their current form in Bach's day, or had not yet been invented. However, in Bach's day transcriptions were common and he himself recast in many guises his own music and that of many other composers.

Sabre Dance, from Gayane

KHACHATURIAN (1903-1978)

Although born in Armenia, Aram Khachaturian is claimed by the Soviet Union as one of her outstanding twentieth century composers. All his musical training was received in post-revolution Russia. Today his name is engraved on the tablet on the walls of the Moscow Conservatory with the other great Russian composers. The Sabre Dance is one of the most familiar excerpts from his ballet *Gayane*, written 1942.

Arabian Dance, from The Nutcracker

TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Early in 1891 Tchaikovsky was commissioned to write a ballet for the Russian Imperial Opera. *The Nutcracker* premiered in St. Petersburg in December 1882. The music, which reveals Tchaikovsky at the height of his powers as an orchestral colorist and confectioner of memorable melodies, was later published as an orchestral suite. The Arabian Dance conjures up an exotic mood as the ballet's heroine and her prince visit a series of magical kingdoms.

Pavane, Op. 50

FAURE (1845-1924)

Linking the end of Romanticism with the second quarter of the 20th century, Gabriel Faure was the most advanced figure in French music until Debussy wrote the opera *Pelleas et Melisande* between 1892 and 1902. In his quietly persuasive way, Faure was immensely influential in the French School of Impressionism.

The Pavane, which enjoyed great popularity throughout Europe in the 16th century, was a stately processional dance. It derived its name from the Latin word for peacock, "pavo," because of the formalized gestures of robe and cloak which accompanied the measured steps of the dance. Faure's graceful *Pavane* is melodious and languid. It was written in 1887.

Boy Meets Horn / Jungle Nights

ELLINGTON (1899-1974)

Jazz composer, band leader and pianist, Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington was for decades one of the leading figures in big-band jazz, and remains the most significant composer of the genre. The selections heard in this program are among the more than 2,000 compositions that he penned.

M-TV for Jerry (Jerome Robbins), from Dance Suite for Brass Quintet

BERNSTEIN (1918-1990)

Leonard Bernstein achieved wide recognition as a conductor, composer, pianist, lecturer, author and teacher. Through television, he achieved the unique position of "music's most articulate spokesman." A prolific composer, his works include symphonies, ballets, musical comedies, opera, songs and choral compositions.

In 1989 he wrote the *Dance Suite for Brass Quintet* for the Empire Brass. In this work he honors five of the twentieth century's most important choreographers, as each of the movements is a musical portrait, and bears the name (or nickname) of each of these celebrated artists: "Dansica for Antony (Tudor);" "Waltz for Agnes (de Mille);" "Bi-Tango for Misha (Mikhail Baryshnikov);" "Two-Step for Mr. B. (George Belanchine);" and "M-TV for Jerry (Jerome Robbins)."

A Christmas Festival

ANDERSON (1908-1975)

Leroy Anderson, composer, arranger, and conductor, was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and studied composition at Harvard with Piston and Enesco, and served as Director of the Harvard University Band. Through a long and successful collaboration with Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops, Anderson gained popularity as a composer of light concert music, including the holiday favorite, "Sleigh Ride." This cleverly arranged medley of Christmas favorites clearly demonstrates Anderson's gift for creatively adapting musical materials for instrumental ensembles.

EMPIRE BRASS

The Empire Brass enjoys an international reputation as North America's finest brass quintet, renowned for its virtuosity, charisma, and the unparalleled quality and diversity of its repertoire. Winner of the Naumburg Chamber Music Award, the quintet performs over 100 concerts a year in such cities as New York, Boston, Chicago, Washington, D. C., London, Paris, Oslo and Tokyo. The Empire Brass has introduced an even larger audience worldwide to the excitement of brass music through its radio and televised appearances and its best-selling recordings on Telarc, Angel/EMI and CBS/Sony.

The Empire Brass tours annually in Europe, South America, and the Far East, and has recently performed to sell-out crowds in the Soviet Union, where its concert was broadcast on Soviet television. Orchestras with which the Empire Brass has performed include the Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, and Minnesota Orchestra. A popular attraction at summer music festivals, the Empire Brass has visited Ravinia, Caramoor, Saratoga, Chautauqua, and Tanglewood, where it continues to lead the Empire Brass Seminar at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute.

Since 1976 the Empire Brass has recorded over 20 albums. Now under exclusive contract with Telarc records, the group's most recent releases include **Class Brass** (Telarc), **Music for Organ, Brass and Percussion** (Telarc), **Empire Brass Plays Bernstein, Gershwin and Tilson Thomas** (Telarc), **Music of Gabrieli** (Telarc), **Joy to the World** (Angel/EMI), **Fireworks** (Angel/EMI), and **A Bach Festival** (Angel/EMI). **Empire Brass in Japan**, a collection of highlights of a three-week tour of Japan, is available on Sony video and CBS/Sony compact disc.

The quintet is a regular guest on public radio with repeat performances on the nationally syndicated programs **St. Paul Sunday Morning** and **Good Evening**, among many others. On television, the Empire Brass appearances have ranged from **Good Morning, America** to **Mr. Roger's Neighborhood**.

Dedicated to expanding the brass quintet repertoire, the Empire Brass has commissioned works from such leading composers as Leonard Bernstein, Michael Tilson Thomas, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, and Michael Torke. In 1991 the Empire Brass premieres a commissioned work by Joan Tower with the New York Philharmonic on the occasion of the Carnegie Hall centennial. In addition to commissioning new music, the Empire Brass also researches and performs rare musical manuscripts, such as its recording of unpublished works of Gabrieli.

The original members of the Empire Brass first met as students at Tanglewood, where they were introduced to each other by Michael Tilson Thomas. Two years later Leonard Bernstein chose three of them to play in the world premiere of his **Mass**, written for the opening of the Kennedy Center. Since then, the Empire Brass has given a command performance for Queen Elizabeth II, performed at a Presidential Inaugural concert, participated in the opening concerts of the newly-renovated Carnegie Hall, and been the recipient of the Harvard Music Association Award.

This season marks the fifteenth consecutive year that the Empire Brass has been Faculty Quintet in Residence at Boston University. In addition to offering an annual concert series in Boston, the quintet leads the Empire Brass Symposium at Boston University's Tanglewood Institute, where it frequently performs. The quintet also leads an annual series of college clinics sponsored by the Selmer Company, maker of all the Empire Brass' instruments.

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