



## PROGRAM NOTES

### Valse Triste (Sad Waltz), Op. 44, No. 1

The *Valse Triste* is a short orchestral work in waltz form by Jean Sibelius. It was originally part of his incidental music for his brother-in-law Arvid Järnefelt's 1903 play *Kuolema* (Death), but is far better known as a separate concert piece.

### Bomba

Lou Harrison began his formal training in 1934 at the San Francisco State College, studying composition with Henry Cowell. After completing his tenure there in 1936, he began an association with John Cage with whom he began composing pieces for unconventional percussion instruments. They used articles found in junkyards, such as brake drums and flower pots, which they chose for their resonant qualities. *Bomba* epitomizes this type of instrumentation and is quite an experience of odd percussion timbres.

### Musica Ricercata

*Musica Ricercata* is a set of eleven pieces for piano by Hungarian composer György Ligeti. The work was composed from 1951 to 1953, shortly after the composer began lecturing at the Budapest Academy of Music. Although the *ricercata* (or *ricercar*) is an established contrapuntal style (and the final movement of the work is in that form), Ligeti's title should probably be interpreted literally as "researched music" or "sought music". This work captures the essence of Ligeti's search to construct his own compositional style *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), and as such presages many of the more radical directions Ligeti would take in the future.

Since this is a large work, the San Geronio High School Percussion Ensemble will perform selections exemplifying the style of the work.

### Ceremonial

American composer Paul Creston enjoyed a long career as both a composer and a music educator. Born Giuseppe Guttoveggio in New York, the young musician changed his name to Creston, an anglicized version of his nickname, Crespino. He produced his first serious work, *Five Dances for Piano*, when he was 26, and a Guggenheim fellowship in 1930 made Creston one of "America's best known young composers." In 1941, he won the New York Music Critics Award for his *Symphony No. 1*. His style features rhythm as a keystone, "constantly shifting subdivisions of a regular meter" and much ingenuity in thematic development. During his long career, Creston has written over 100 major compositions, including symphonies, choral works, piano pieces and songs. *Ceremonial* for percussion ensemble and piano was composed in 1972.

### Vivo Vivaldi

Originally composed for mandolin and small orchestra, *Vivo Vivaldi* has been arranged by Gary Gilroy for keyboard percussion quartet: bells, xylophone, vibraphone and marimba. This arrangement compliments not only the particular musical style of Vivaldi, but the timbre of the keyboard instruments enhance the musical impact of the work itself. Gary Gilroy is on the music faculty of Cal State University Fresno.

### Reggaelia

*Reggaelia* gives an exhilarating dose of the musical genre to which the clever title alludes. The piece is written for a nine member ensemble playing xylophone, vibes, two marimbas, a large compliment of Latin percussion, plus triangle, temple blocks, gong, chimes, bass drum, wind chimes, timpani, and electric bass. Included are sections designed for keyboard solos and for drum solos. The 32nd-note passagework in the mallet parts at the very end of the arrangement gives it a powerful conclusion.

### Three Fêted Wombats

The *Three Feted Wombats* is a composition by percussion ensemble alumnus, Blake van Vliet. Concerning this work, the composer remarks, "Celebrating the selfless service of marsupials is a musical event long steeped in centuries of tradition. The historical representatives are numerous and varied. To name examples of something so ubiquitous would be an insult to the reader. Tonight's selection is in three, short *attaca* movements. Several rhythmic motifs are the nuts and bolts of Señor Uombat. Why is the sky blue? Why do trees grow upwards? Are tiki torches appropriate at a baptism? Just ask "Señor." Millicent is a dodecaphonic fugue, though it's little more than an exposition and a diminutive *stretto*. Though not licensed to do so, every prescription she writes is guaranteed legible. That's something. Steve is all fists and elbows, and believe you me, he flails with the best of them, But, please, we cannot dismiss his unique accomplishments. After the smoke clears, the melody is reduced to four pitches. They're Steve's favorites. Hey, we like Steve."

### Starry Nights, Doggy Days

Larry London studied English literature at Harvard University and music composition at Mills College. He presently lives and teaches in Berkeley, California. Originally written for clarinet and strings, *Starry Nights, Doggy Days* was reorchestrated for two vibraphones and two marimbas for the San Francisco Percussion Ensemble. The three movements (fast-slow-fast) feature two mallet melodies with a great deal of interplay between parts. Part Three is a brisk selection featuring an Oriental-tinged melody in C minor with contrasting sections using the D<sub>b</sub> pentatonic scale.

### Past Midnight

Thomas Gauger received his BM in percussion and composition from the University of Illinois. He recently retired after a distinguished 40 years as percussionist with the famed Boston Symphony and Boston Pops Orchestras. From 1965 until 1997 he was also on the faculty at Boston University and the Boston University Tanglewood Institute. Commissioned by the University of Utah Percussion Ensemble, *Past Midnight* is written for ten players using four marimbas, two vibraphones and timpani with three others on multiple percussion set-ups. Hand bells are employed at the beginning of the work, which provides the listener with the visualization of the striking of midnight and the first few moments after. As the music progresses, an expressive contrast with theme development is achieved by changing meters and tempos while interplaying instrument groups. This rhythmic dance explores the path the world takes after midnight.

### Head Talk

Mark Ford received his BME from East Carolina University and his MM for the University of North Texas. He is currently the coordinator of percussion activities at the University of North Texas, and Past-President of the Percussive Arts Society. He is a marimba specialist as well as music educator, author and composer. *Head Talk* is a classic piece that provides the percussion quintet with a dose of sophisticated comic relief. Sitting in a semi-circle, the group makes use of a variety of drumheads, small to large. The opening rhythmic motive has a definitive "rock-samba groove" to it, and each performer ends up imitating the opening motive. The work uses a variety of performance techniques culminating in an ending that is a "burst" of excitement. *Head Talk* has been successfully performed at various Percussive Arts Festivals around the world.