

UNIVERSITY OF
RRedlands
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

FREDERICK LOEWE SYMPOSIUM ON AMERICAN MUSIC
THE MUSIC OF LIBBY LARSEN

FACULTY CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERT

Tuesday, October 27, 2015 - 8 p.m.
FREDERICK LOEWE PERFORMANCE HALL

Corker (1977)

Kathryn Nevin, clarinet
Yuri Inoo, percussion

Trio in Four Movements (2005)

III. Quietly Throughout
IV.

Sara Andon, flute
Kira Blumberg, viola
Mary Dropkin, harp

Concert Piece for Bassoon and Piano (2008)

Carolyn Beck, bassoon
Nelms McKelvain, piano

- INTERMISSION -

Black Birds, Red Hills (1987/rev. 1996)

Kathryn Nevin, clarinet
Kira Blumberg, viola
Lara Urrutia, piano

Libby Larsen
(b. 1950)

Blue Piece for Violin and Piano (2010)

Jeanne Skrocki, violin
Lara Urrutia, piano

Bronze Veils (1979)

Andrew Glendening, trombone
Yuri Inoo, percussion
Bill Schlitt, percussion

PROGRAM NOTES

by Libby Larsen

Corker (1977)

Corker: "someone or something of astonishing or excellent quality"
— Random House Dictionary

My inspiration for the work is drawn from 1940's popular musical language, which I love, because the performers are spectacular musicians and because it speaks the rhythms and harmonic language of contemporary American English.

Trio in Four Movements (2005)

In *Trio in Four Movements*, I set about to use clarity of gesture and economy of texture to create an elegant vehicle for lyric expression. Pulse—calm, quiet, flowing—lies at the heart of Movement III. Lyrical lines are presented in the instruments, sometimes solo, sometimes unison, sometimes in moments of imitation. Movement IV uses dart gestures, articulation, quicksilver and air cadence to create its effect.

Concert Piece for Bassoon and Piano (2008)

In three movements, *Concert Piece for Bassoon and Piano* casts the bassoon in the role of minstrel/poet—a Broadway Bard, if you will—who has gathered us for a Tell about our culture's expressiveness.

Our expressiveness, the way we speak, move, and communicate, is a deeply lyrical narrative combined with a syncopated, percussive, multi-inflected, and driving nature. I composed the music from this perspective.

The first movement of *Concert Piece for Bassoon and Piano* uses inflection and articulation to define the bassoon's lyric melody as it moves over and around the

piano's driving, jazz-articulated music. Time and forward motion are suspended in the second movement, allowing room for the bassoon's broadly lyrical lines to sing freely and emotionally. Bassoon and piano come together in the third movement for syncopated interplay in an abstract call-and-response dance.

Black Birds, Red Hills (1987/ rev. 1996)

Georgia O'Keeffe found the flow of time and color in music inspiring to her work as a painter. *Black Birds, Red Hills* is inspired by six paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe. Each painting explores the flow of time and color on her beloved red hills of New Mexico.

In each painting O'Keeffe reveals perspective, beauty and meaning through the magnification of objects, specifically the horizon line, the black rock and the black bird. Movements I, III & IV reflect the "V shape" of the hills just outside O'Keeffe's window. She describes this shape as the arms of two great hills, which reach out to the sky and hold it, suggesting to me an abstract cradle. In movement II, I liken the music to O'Keeffe's image of the black rocks. O'Keeffe found these rocks on her walks to the Glen Canyon dam. She became fascinated with the effect of time on the rocks, noting that time has turned them into objects which are precious to look at and hold. Finally, to paint the black birds which lived in the hills near her, O'Keeffe covered the red hills with snow and focused on the bird as a metaphor for time, always there and always moving away.

Bronze Veils (1979)

Bronze Veils is inspired by a series of paintings by the American painter Morris Louis. The paintings were created by layering soft tints on canvas so that the effect was that of gazing through, or not gazing through, several veils of color. That visual effect inspires the combination of instruments in my work. The layering of long decays from metallic percussion in combination with trombone should allow the listener to audibly penetrate several 'veils' of sound. *Bronze Veils* was composed for William McGlaughlin in 1979.

In 1977 I discovered the paintings of Morris Louis at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, through an exhibit dedicated to his work. I was fascinated by his painting technique, a process in which he poured his paint, diluted with thinners, onto a large canvas, and then tipped the canvas, guiding the paint along. When the paint dried, it created a thin veil of color on the canvas. He then repeated the process layering another color over the preceding one. The results of the process create the effect of several veils of color through which the viewer peers.

I thought it would be an interesting composing challenge to see if I could created

a similar effect, but with thin veils of instrumental color. So I chose trombone, metalophones, and a few membranophones as the instrumentation for *Bronze Veils*. The title for the piece is taken from a Louis painting of the same title.

When I composed the work in 1979, I envisioned a time when it would be not only be easy to project images during the performance, but also quiet (as slide projectors were at the time were very noisy) and able to flow musically with the music of the piece.

BIOGRAPHY

Libby Larsen, composer in residence

Libby Larsen (b. 24 December 1950, Wilmington, Delaware) is one of America's most performed living composers. She has created a catalogue of over 500 works spanning virtually every genre from intimate vocal and chamber music to massive orchestral works and over twelve operas. Grammy Award winning and widely recorded, including over fifty CDs of her work, she is constantly sought after for commissions and premieres by major artists, ensembles, and orchestras around the world, and has established a permanent place for her works in the concert repertory.

As a vigorous, articulate advocate for the music and musicians of our time, in 1973 Larsen co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum, now the American Composer's Forum. A former holder of the Papamarkou Chair at John W. Kluge Center of the Library of Congress, Larsen has also held residencies with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony, and the Colorado Symphony. Her career has been recognized with several awards including MIT's McDermott award, the Peabody Award, and the American Academy's Arts and Letters Award.

For a complete calendar of School of Music events visit

www.redlands.edu/music