

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Verge Ensemble

Music by Elliott Carter and a new work by Jeffrey Mumford

November 30, 2008
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court



For the convenience of concertgoers
the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm.

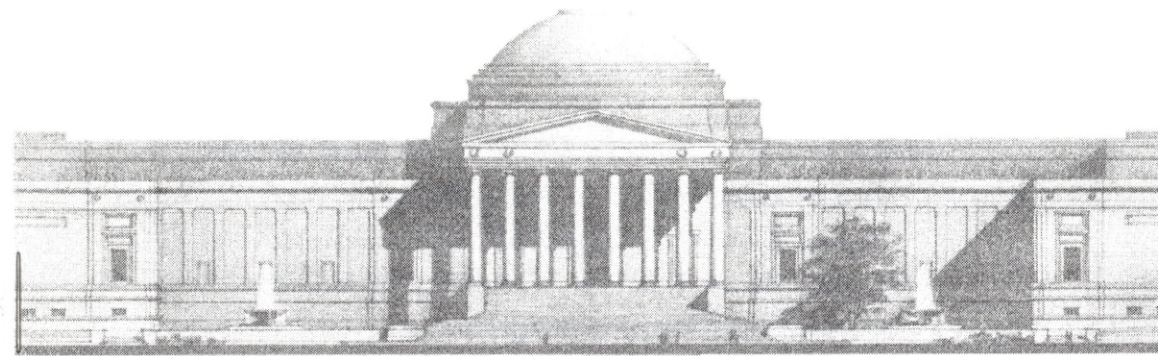
The use of cameras or recording equipment during the
performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones,
pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of
the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

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National Gallery of Art
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Washington, DC

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The Sixty-seventh Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,694th Concert

The Singers Companye
Samuel Gordon, *artistic director*
Kim Bakkum, *pianist*
Jane Berkner, *flutist*
Lynn Turner, *reader*

Presented in honor of the exhibition
George de Forest Brush: The Indian Paintings

November 16, 2008
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

“Where the Earth Meets the Sky”

Z. Randall Stroepe

Where the Earth Meets the Sky

In Time of Silver Rain (Langston Hughes)

The Pasture (Robert Frost)

Song of the Earth (Traditional Mohawk)

Jackson Berkey

Native American Ambiances

Loon Lake By Morning

The Sacred Earth (Chief Seattle – Suquamish)

Words from Our Brothers (Black Elk)

Prairie Fire (Najinyanupi – Sioux)

This We Know

The Web of Life (Chief Seattle – Suquamish)

Nancy Grundahl

With Beauty

Introduction, Canon, and Hymn

Eleanor Daley

Grandmother Moon (Mary Louise Martin – Mi'kmaq poet)

John Muehleisen

Prairie Waters By Night (Carl Sandburg)

Kenneth Jennings

American Indian Songs

Song of Spring (Chippewa)

A Voice I Sent (Teton Sioux)

Love Song (Chippewa)

The Dust of the Red Wagon (Northern Ute)

The Deer and the Flower (Yaqui)

The Sunrise — Healing Song (Papago)

To the End of Our Tribe (Seminole)

Mark Hayes

Home on the Range (Traditional song of the American West)

Patricia LaNasa, *harmonica*

Berkey (Adaptation)

Cibola

Stephen Paulus

Hymn to America (Text by Michael Dennis Browne)

The Musicians

The Singers Companye is a chamber choir consisting of professional musicians from northeast Ohio. Samuel Gordon founded the ensemble in September 2007 in order to provide singers with the opportunity to sing great choral works for chamber choir from virtually every period of musical composition. Gordon is the artistic director of Corofest Italia and in June 2008 Singers Companye was the choir-in-residence for that festival. In addition, the ensemble has performed in Assisi, Bologna, Perugia, and Pistoia, and has also sung on the Music at the Farmstead series, a unique music festival in the Cuyahoga National Park near Akron, Ohio. Earlier this month they performed tonight's program in their home city of Akron, and will continue the season with a variety of performances that include the Kulas Series at the University of Akron, a Bach-Mendelssohn concert, and concerts in Cleveland and Pittsburgh as well as the Montana Choral Festival. They have been invited to the international choral festival that will be held in Tolosa, Spain, in October 2009.

Soprano

Merissa Coleman
Samantha Garner
Christine Gingerich
Jill Hornickel
Patricia LaNasa
Jennifer Moore
Catherine Neff
Valerie Niese
Marlene Sell
Christine Stewart
Katherine Wilkinson

Alto

Yvonne Broome
Rebecca Brown
Jennifer Browning-Patrick
Susan Collins
Marissa Leonino
Patricia Moyer
Nancy Robinson
Kristina von Held
Jennifer Yachanin
Tampa Murphy

Tenor

Anthony Bianchi
Byron Butler
Lawrence Butler
Robert Carlyon
Nathaniel Duvuvuei
Philip Formes
Gregory Huber
Jesse Lange
Christopher Oseredczyk
Scott Williams
Dominik Fischer
Sylvia Zucker

Bass

Doug Downie
Joseph Guy
Robert Grant
Sam Kitzler
Paul Kroeger
Troy Mason
Robert Mollard
Roger Sell
Jeffrey Sonoda
Paul Stewart

Founder and artistic director of The Singers Companye, Samuel Gordon, is director of choral studies and professor of music at The University of Akron. He has been actively engaged in both singing and conducting in the United States and abroad. From 1985–2003, he was the tenor in the National Gallery Vocal Arts Ensemble, and from 1988–1996 his Maryland Camerata was choir-in-consortium at the Gallery. Gordon performed concerts of vocal chamber music with the Vocal Arts Ensemble at the Louvre in Paris and at the Belvedere Museum in Vienna.

In 1988 Gordon and the other members of the Vocal Arts Ensemble won the Studio Lauda Award at the International Early Music Festival in Zadar, Yugoslavia (now Croatia), and he has won top prizes at the Concorso Polifonico Guido d'Arezzo (Italy), the International Musical Eisteddfod (Wales), and the Welsh National Eisteddfod. He was the first American to win the Welsh competition, where his ensembles sang in Welsh. His conducting skills have also earned the Bronze Horreo in Orviedo, Spain, the Laureate of the Fiat Conducting Prize, and the Trimillennial Medal from the city of Cadiz, Spain.

Performances at international festivals have included the Ambler Festival, the Bregenz International Festival, the Flanders Festival, the Haydn Festival of a Lifetime at the Kennedy Center, the Holland Festival, the Ljubljana Festival, Mozaik (the former Yugoslavia), the Rheingau Musik

Festival, the Salzburg Festival, and the Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds (Italy). As guest conductor, he has led the Canton Symphony, the National Gallery Orchestra, the Pennsylvania Ballet Orchestra, the Perugia Chamber Orchestra, the Santa Fe Symphony, and the Taipei Philharmonic. He has been a featured soloist with the orchestras of Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Kansas City, St. Louis, the National Gallery, and El Paso, as well as with the National Symphony Orchestra.

Gordon is also active as a composer. In 2006 The Santa Fe Women's Ensemble premiered his *Motets for the Lady Mass* and in 2007 he was composer-in-residence for that ensemble. He has recorded for Koch International Classics and Telarc International and has his own choral music series with The National Music Publishers, where he has published more than twenty choral compositions. His works have been premiered at the National Gallery and the Kennedy Center, among other venues.

The Program

The paintings of George de Forest Brush (1854/1855–1941) have been described as complex meditations on the advent of modernism in which the Indian serves as metaphor. Many of the works in this program, especially those by composers who, like Brush, are not American Indians, can be perceived much the same way. Even though they may be vastly different from anything American Indians might have sung or enjoyed, they spring, without exception, from a deep reverence for their culture. The exhibition *George de Forest Brush: The Indian Paintings* remains on view at the Gallery through January 4, 2009.

Z. Randall Stroepe's *Where the Earth Meets the Sky*, (translated from the Mohawk word *Kaoniakatatie*) sets to music three poems that embrace feelings of respect for the splendor of nature and earth's gifts. The third song hauntingly embraces the Native vision of America.

In Time of Silver Rain, Langston Hughes

In time of silver rain the earth puts forth new life again,
Green grasses grow and flowers lift their heads
And over all the plain the wonder spreads of life.
The butterflies lift silken wings to catch a rainbow cry,
And trees put forth new leaves to sing of life!

The Pasture, Robert Frost

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I sh'n't be gone long. — You come too.
I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's so young,
It totters when she licks it with her tongue,
I sh'n't be gone long. — You come too.

Song of the Earth, Traditional Mohawk

Karonejo. I am the song of the stone, ancient as light, Hajona,
creation, I.

I am the whisper of wind that summons the rain where earth
meets sky.
My song made the seasons and rivers that quenched the sun, the
sunset, red as pipestone.
I am the snow on the limb, the fruit on the vine, the stillness of
night breaking at dawn.
I am the music of creation, the footprint on the water, the wind on
eagle's wings.
Where the earth meets the sky, there will my spirit be.

Jackson Berkey combines the elements of Native American texts with
percussion, flute, and natural environmental sounds. The layers of sound, or
“ambiances,” exist either separately or in varied combinations throughout the
six sections of the work. The harmonic modalities of the piece were deter-
mined by a five-hole Native American flute.

The Sacred Earth, Chief Seattle–Suquamish
Sacred. Every part to my people. Every shining pine needle. Every
sandy shore.
Every mist in the dark woods. Every meadow. Every humming insect.
All are holy in the memory and experience of my people.

Prairie Fire, Najinyanupi–Sioux
When the prairie is on fire, you see the animals ringed in flames.
You see them run and try to hide so they will not burn!
This is how it is now with us!

The Web of Life, Chief Seattle–Suquamish
This we know. The earth does not belong to us, we belong to
the earth.
All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the
children of earth.
We did not weave the web of life, we are only a strand in it.
Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. This we know. The
earth does not belong to us.

In *With Beauty*, for treble voices, Nancy Grundahl sets the Introduction
and Canon to traditional American Indian texts that speak of the “talking
God” who surrounds us in beauty. The third section of the piece is a chorale-
like setting of the Folliot Pierpont hymn text, *For the Beauty of the Earth*:

Now talking God. With your feet I walk. I walk with your limbs. I
carry forth your body. For you my mind thinks, for you, my voice
speaks. Beauty is behind me. Above and below hovers the beautiful.
I am surrounded by it. I am immersed. In my youth I am aware of
it, and in old age, I shall walk quietly on the beautiful trail.
For the beauty of the earth, For the beauty of the skies, For the love
which from our birth over and around us lies, God of all, to thee we
raise this, our hymn of grateful praise.

The prolific Canadian composer Eleanor Daley selected a poem, *Grand-
mother Moon*, by Mary Louise Martin for this exquisite choral work. Martin
is a Mi'kmaq poet who currently lives on a small island in British Columbia.
Mi'kmaq people are the First Nations People of Nova Scotia; these Aboriginal
people have their own language and the term Mi'kmaq comes from their
word, nīkmak, meaning “my kind-friends.”

Grandmother Moon
She looks into and beyond my soul...
the lacy cedar boughs creating her shadows...
cedar ones weave design of midnight canvas...
she looks into and beyond my soul...
she a powerful sacred hoop of full light...
simplicity against the ebony blues and blacks of night...
sky land and crystal star people...
she looks into and beyond my soul...
her round face of translucent beauty and light...
quiet powers speak out in her name... we'lalin [welcome].

Prairie Waters by Night by Carl Sandburg, inspired John Muehleisen's
musical setting. Sandburg's reputation as a balladeer, historian, and folklor-
ist combined with Muehleisen's Pacific Northwest heritage seems to be a

good combination for a work that reflects Native American traditions. The chatter of birds and the litany of nature sounds provide beautiful images for this particular program.

Prairie Waters by Night

Chatter of birds two by two raises a night song joining a litany of running water—sheer waters showing the russet of old stones remembering many rains. And the long willows drowse on the shoulders of the running water, and sleep from much music; joined songs of day-end, feathery throats and stony water, in a choir chanting new psalms. It is too much for the long willows when low laughter of a red moon comes down; and the willows drowse and sleep on the shoulders of the running water.

Composed in 1976, *American Indian Songs* are set to texts from the Chippewa, Northern Ute, Papago, Seminole, Teton Sioux, and Yaqui nations. The poetry has been translated by Frances Densmore.

Song of Spring

As my eyes search the prairie I feel the summer in the spring

A Voice I Sent

Today is mine (I claimed)... (to) a man... a voice... I sent you...
grant me now... here (he) is.

Love Song

A loon I thought it was. But it was my love's splashing oar.

The Dust of the Red Wagon

Red wagon dust... white man... looking around.

The Deer and the Flower

The deer looks at a flower

The Sunrise—Healing Song

The sun is rising. At either side a bow is lying. Beside the bows are lion-babies. The sky is pink. That is all. The moon is setting. At either side are bamboos for arrow-making. Beside the bamboos are

wild-cat babies. They walk uncertainly. That is all. The sun is slowly departing. It is lower in its setting. Black bats will be swooping when the sun is gone. That is all. The spirit children are beneath. They are moving back and forth. They roll in play among tufts of white eagle down. That is all.

To the End of Our Tribe

They are taking us beyond Miami. They are taking us beyond the Caloosa River. They are taking us to the end of our tribe. They are taking us to Palm Beach, coming back beside Okeechobee Lake. They are taking us to an old town in the West.

The inclusion of cowboy songs and hymns in this program makes the point that the serene beauty of America's heartland inspires poets and composers who live there regardless of their ethnic heritage. *Cibola* was one of over 300 songs that Native American composer/singer/guitarist Phillip White Hawk wrote about America. A drive through western New Mexico, bordered by Arizona, displays the beautiful scenic desert area with its rolling terrain marked by striking mesas and colorful sandstone. The stories of this region about the Seven Cities of Cibola and legendary vast treasure attracted sixteenth-century Spanish expeditions. White Hawk's song captures the thundering hooves of horses as they race from the whistles and calls during the clash of cultures. *Hymn to America* was written by Stephen Paulus for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The beautiful poem by Michael Dennis Browne brings us full circle in a program that celebrates nature as America's first people experienced it. Browne's poem pays tribute to the grandeur that is now the United States of America.

Program notes by Samuel Gordon