

74TH SEASON OF CONCERTS

APRIL 17, 2016 • NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART



PROGRAM

3:30 • West Building, West Garden Court

PostClassical Ensemble

Angel Gil-Ordóñez, music director

Commentary by John Mauceri

David Jones, clarinet

Netanel Draiblate, violin

Eva Cappelletti-Chao, violin

Philippe Chao, viola

Bernard Herrmann (1911–1975)

Souvenirs de Voyage, Quintet for Clarinet and Strings (1967)

Lento; Allegro moderato

Andante (Berceuse)

Andantino (Canto amoroso)

Bernard Herrmann

Sinfonietta for Strings (1935)

Prelude: Slowly

Scherzo: Presto

Adagio

Interlude: Allegro

Variations

Bernard Herrmann

Psycho: A Narrative for String Orchestra (1968, restored and edited by

John Mauceri, 1999)

Post-Concert Discussion with John Mauceri, Christopher Husted,

Angel Gil-Ordóñez, and Joseph Horowitz

The Musicians

PostClassical Ensemble, called “one of the country’s most innovative music groups” (Philip Kennicott) and “wildly ambitious” (Anne Midgette), was founded in 2003 by Angel Gil-Ordóñez and Joseph Horowitz as an experimental orchestral laboratory. PostClassical Ensemble programming is thematic and cross-disciplinary, typically incorporating art, film, dance, or theater, exploring unfamiliar works and composers, or recontextualizing standard repertoire. The topic of music and film has long been a PostClassical Ensemble specialty. With the National Gallery of Art Film Division, PostClassical Ensemble has produced a festival of films scored by Shostakovich (with the participation of Tony Palmer and Solomon Volkov), a full day of “Stravinsky on Film” (including the American premiere of Richard Leacock’s *A Stravinsky Portrait*), and many other such events. PostClassical Ensemble’s best-selling Naxos DVDs of *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936), *The River* (1938), and *The City* (1939) feature fresh recordings of the classic Virgil Thomson and Aaron Copland soundtracks. A third PostClassical Ensemble Naxos DVD, to be released this spring, is *Redes* (1935), with a score by Silvestre Revueltas, a peak achievement in the history of music and the moving image; the launch is May 13, 2016, at the Mexican Cultural Institute, Washington, DC.

Netanel Draiblate, *concertmaster*

Nick Currie, *violin*

Regino Madrid, *violin*

Sonya Chung, *violin*

Sharon Oh, *violin*

Laura Knutsen, *violin*

Eva Cappelletti-Chao, *violin*

Jennifer Rickard, *violin*

Elise Blake, *violin*

David Katz, *violin*

Daisuke Yamamoto, *violin*

Philippe Chao, *viola*

Megan Yanik, *viola*

Chris Shieh, *viola*

Derek Smith, *viola*

Ben Capps, *cello*

Vivian Podgainy, *cello*

Troy Stuart, *cello*

Schuyler Slack, *cello*

Nathaniel West, *bass*

Aaron Clay, *bass*

Program Notes

Souvenirs de Voyage

The long first movement of Herrmann's 1967 clarinet quintet, *Souvenirs de Voyage*, is to my ears a formidable compositional achievement by any standard. It also furnishes an irresistible vehicle for the range and seamless legato of the clarinet. The liquid ebb and flow of sound, the lapping waves of song, the interpolated *valse triste* acquire a barely perceptible cumulative momentum, an intensification of multiplying eddies and ripples. When the movement's hypnotic *molto tranquillo* beginning returns at the close, we feel we have journeyed somewhere, even if that makes no ultimate difference in a world of sadness and remembrance.

The quintet's second movement is a rocking berceuse whose disturbing existential undertow is of course a Herrmann signature. The final *canto amoroso* begins with the violins singing a love duet in thirds. Soon the thirds accelerate as romantic zephyrs. A Venetian carnival is heard across the water. From Steven Smith's superb Herrmann biography, *A Heart at Fire's Center* (2002), we learn that J. M. W. Turner's great Venetian canvases were here a point of inspiration. Equally pertinent is the quintet's dedication to Norma Shepherd, who became Herrmann's third wife the same year this music was composed.

In the turbulent world of Bernard Herrmann, *Souvenirs de Voyage* is a balm. It is also, I would say, a formidable (though little-known) entry in the catalog of chamber music for clarinet. *Program notes by Joseph Horowitz*

Sinfonietta for Strings

The *Sinfonietta for Strings* is Bernard Herrmann's first published work, solicited by Henry Cowell for his New Music Edition's Orchestra Series. Finished in the last days of 1935, after what appears to have been an extended gestation, it is by far Herrmann's most substantial attempt at an avant-garde style, and reflects his rarely discussed acquaintance with the stylistic speculations of Cowell, Carl Ruggles, Charles Seeger, and Ruth Crawford Seeger. Despite claims to the contrary, there is no evidence that it was ever played during the composer's lifetime. Herrmann did, however, return to it in 1957, when a performing edition was planned. Although he altered only a few details of pitch and rhythm, many other subtleties were addressed extensively. It went unpublished in that version, but thoroughly reacquainted him with the work and may have encouraged him to ransack it for the music he contributed to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* in 1960.

It is sad and unfair that the *Sinfonietta* is routinely discussed only in relation to *Psycho*, however interesting that relationship may be. A 1932 string quartet that has long remained untraced may have served as a point of departure: it, too, was atonal in style. There are clear allusions to similar works of this period: for instance, the opening of the *Sinfonietta's* scherzo and its several prominent glissandi readily recall the second movement of Bartók's *String Quartet no. 4*, which became an enthusiastic topic of comment in Cowell's circle after Ruth Crawford Seeger brought news of it from a concert she had attended in Europe in 1931. The *Sinfonietta* has marked expressionist qualities that grew naturally out of Herrmann's youthful fascination with Schoenberg: its atonalism is lyrical and romantic; there is a tendency toward aphorism, with abrupt shifts of mood and texture; movements are terse, or conspicuously segmented, as in the closing variations. Though Herrmann's acquaintance with

Cowell and the Seegers ensured that he would have been well aware of their advocacy of formal dissonant counterpoint, the *Sinfonietta* is not painstaking in its methods. The manuscripts do, however, make clear that several important passages were revised from simpler formulations into denser, more imitatively contrapuntal alternatives.

Admirers of Herrmann's mature style will find little of that in the freely atonal contrapuntal textures that dominate this work, and the composer was quick to depart from it subsequently. As the *Sinfonietta*'s first print run was mailed to Cowell's subscribers in the summer of 1936, CBS's pioneering Columbia Workshop challenged Herrmann's inventiveness adroitly, and laid the foundations for his unique approach to scoring narrative films. The version of the *Sinfonietta* presented today is the one published by Henry Cowell's New Music Edition in June 1936, and has been corrected by the present writer. *Program notes by Christopher Husted*

Psycho: A Narrative for String Orchestra

In 1968, eight years after Bernard Herrmann had completed his score to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, the composer was living part of the time in London, hoping to find there greater respect for his music and more opportunities to conduct. It was then that he prepared performing editions of a number of his greatest film scores. Before this, the music remained unplayed and unplayable, since it was unpublished and existed only as a series of raw film cues.

Probably the most important creation of this period was *Psycho: A Narrative for String Orchestra*. In this new work, he took multiple cues, reordered and recomposed them, changing hundreds of details, making internal cuts, adding repeats, and linking the elements together so as to create a single concert work. It is not a suite, nor is it a sequence of short cues to accompany film clips; it is intended to free the music from the visual elements of the film. In this sense it is not unlike Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* cantata and Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antartica* — musical material from a film score adapted into a concert work. Herrmann never performed the work live, though he did record it. For over thirty years, the only orchestral material available for performance was the individual cues upon which the *Narrative* was based.

In 1999, when I was preparing for a Hitchcock Centennial concert in Los Angeles, the discrepancies between the published materials and the Herrmann recording led me to surmise what I believe had happened: the cues that had been photocopied for Herrmann for his use in composing the new work were then rented as if they constituted the work itself. Those cues are Prelude, The City, The Rainstorm, The Madhouse, The Murder, The Water, The Swamp, The Stairs, The Knife, The Cellar, and Finale. It was later ascertained that composer/arranger Fred Steiner had pulled these cues from an archive in Los Angeles and sent them to Herrmann for the express purpose of creating a new orchestral work.

In discussing the matter with Mrs. Norma Herrmann, she remembered her husband working on this new concert piece in London. She kindly retrieved his manuscripts, and we were able to get color photocopies of Herrmann's work on the old cues, marked with black- and red-inked emendations of the original cues for the film. By comparing those manuscripts with his recording, it was possible to reconstruct a new score, which is now published and can supplant the unedited cues that have been used all these years.

The world concert premiere of *Psycho: A Narrative for String Orchestra* took place at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion on February 9, 2000, with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra. The European premiere took place on January 19, 2001, with the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig. Both performances were under my direction.

A second 2013 edition (used for today's concert) is based on more than a decade of performances and a further comparison of sources. Herrmann's bowings, many of which were not used in his recording, have been adjusted to better conform to his intentions, as heard on that performance. *Program notes by John Mauceri*

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Fourth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin Concerts

Prague — New York Effects

A transatlantic collaboration of music and dance. Cosponsored by the Embassy of the Czech Republic

April 23, Saturday, 2:00

West Building, West Garden Court

Inscape

Music by John Harbison, Chen Yi, Asha Srinivasan, and Toru Takemitsu

April 24, Sunday, 3:30

West Building, West Garden Court

PostClassical Ensemble

Music by Daniel Schnyder and Min Xiao-Fen. Presented in honor of Asian Heritage Month

May 1, Sunday, 3:30

West Building, West Garden Court

Oran Etkin, clarinet

“Re-imagining Benny Goodman”

Presented in honor of *In Celebration of Paul Mellon*

May 8, Sunday, 3:00, 4:15

West Building, West Garden Court

Ariel Quartet, with Alon Goldstein, piano

Music by Brahms and Mozart. Made possible by the Gottesman Fund in memory of Milton M. Gottesman

May 15, Sunday, 3:30

West Building, West Garden Court

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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