"AMERICAN MILESTONES"

**John Harrison Harbison (b. 1938) Songs America Loves to Sing**

Harbison graduated from Harvard University and subsequently attended Princeton University, where he studied with Roger Sessions. His career has been distinguished by many prizes and awards, including a MacArthur “Genius” Grant and commissions from the Rockefeller Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, and Koussevitzky Foundation. He received the Pulitzer Prize in 1987 for his cantata The Flight into Egypt. Major premieres have been presented by the San Francisco Symphony, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Houston Symphony, among many others. His opera The Great Gatsby was premiered by the Metropolitan Opera in 1999. Harbison has taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for many years, being named Institute Professor in 1995, the highest academic honor MIT offers to resident faculty. Songs America Loves to Sing was commissioned jointly by the Atlanta Chamber Players, with funding from Cherry Logan Emerson, and by the Da Capo Chamber Players with an award from the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition at Brigham Young University. The premiere was given by the Atlanta Chamber Players at the Schwartz Center for the Performing Arts at Emory University in Atlanta on 24 October 2004.

Harbison said he intended to evoke “a distant, quaint vision: the family around the piano singing familiar songs, a Currier and Ives print . . .” Most of the tunes subjected to the composer’s imagination remain immediately recognizable, transformed into a series of solos and canons for the various instruments.

**Michael James Gandolfi (b. 1956) Canzona Nova: Fractured Fairy Tale**

Gandolfi began his education at the Berklee College of Music before transferring to the New England Conservatory of Music. He eventually received both bachelors and masters degrees there and is now head of the NEC composition department. In 1986 he was a Fellow of the Tanglewood Music Center where he studied with Leonard Bernstein and Oliver Knussen. He has served on the faculty of Harvard University, Indiana University, and the Phillips Academy at Andover; since 1997 he has been the coordinator for the Tanglewood Music Center’s composition department. His works have been premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, The New World Symphony, the Houston Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, among others.

The composer says Canzona Nova: Fractured Fairy Tale was influenced by his study of sixteenth-century instrumental canzonas, “a form characterized by lively rhythms, themes that are developed through various contrapuntal treatments, and contrasting sections . . . There is also a kinship with Dixieland music; not in its surface sound, but through the combining of several different tunes that are played simultaneously; a salient feature of Dixieland music.” The intriguing subtitle was suggested by a friend who, upon hearing early sketches, commented that the work-in-progress had a “fractured fairy tale” quality. Canzona Nova: Fractured Fairy Tale was commissioned by and is dedicated to Paula Peace and the Atlanta Chamber Players.

**Arthur William Foote (1853-1937) Piano Quartet in C Major, Opus 23**

Foote was prominent among a group of American composers active in New England at the turn of the last century. These included Edward MacDowell (Columbia University), George Chadwick (New England Conservatory), Horatio Parker (Yale University, Chadwick’s student and teacher of Charles Ives), and John Knowles Paine (Harvard University, teacher of Foote). They were a conservative lot, devoted to the forms and methods of the late Romantic era. All except Foote received musical training in Europe. Foote alone was educated entirely in the United States, the first music student to receive a Master of Arts degree from Harvard in 1875. He was one of the most accomplished and distinguished professional musicians this nation has ever produced. Unfortunately, some 75 years after his death, Foote is mostly forgotten, in part because, though he lived well into the twentieth century, his work never progressed beyond the era of Brahms. Musicologist William Austin defended Sergei Rachmaninov by suggesting that he was one of a handful of great composers (Bach for example, or Haydn) who grew artistically within a single style, even as styles changed around them. Perhaps we should consider Foote similarly. To say that his music is neither “challenging” nor “progressive” does not lessen its importance. This piano quartet was completed in August 1890 and is dedicated to his teacher, John Knowles Paine. The premiere was given 21 April 1891 in Boston, the composer at the piano. Although infrequently performed these days, it was widely performed during Foote’s lifetime both at home and in Europe.

Program commentary by Edmund Trafford