

An American Portrait

Conte – *A Copland Portrait* - 8'

Desjardins – *Bartholdiade* - 8'

Gershwin – Cto. for Piano in F – M. Thompson, piano - 31'

Dooley – *El Mirador* (world premiere) -8'

Bernstein - *West Side Story: Symphonic Dances* - 22'

A Copland Portrait* *David Conte (b. 1955)

David Conte is currently Professor of Composition and Conductor of the Conservatory Chorus at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He has received commissions from Chanticleer, the San Francisco Symphony Chorus, the Dayton, Oakland and Stockton Symphonies, the American Guild of Organists, Sonoma City Opera and the Gerbode Foundation. A Fulbright Scholar in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, a Ralph Vaughan Williams Fellow and an Aspen Music Festival Conducting Fellow, Conte earned his Bachelor's degree from Bowling Green State University, where he studied with Ruth Inglefield and Wallace DePue, and his Master's and Doctoral degrees from Cornell University, where he studied with Karel Husa, Robert Palmer, Steven Stucky and Thomas Sokol.

A Copland Portrait was commissioned by the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra (Neal Gittleman, Music Director), and premiered in 2000. Conte set out quite consciously to evoke various aspects of Copland's work by combining and recombining them within the terms of Conte's own musical personality. For example, the first theme of *A Copland Portrait* combines the character of a theme from *The Red Pony* with the rhythmic texture of the scherzo of the Third Symphony. While composing the piece he was conscious of drawing inspiration from many of Copland's works; a melodic shape here, a harmonic gesture there, until he arrived at something that felt fresh and new to him.

Bartholdiade* *Jacques Desjardins (b. 1962)

Jacques Desjardins is an active composer, conductor, instructor, and performer. He has received commissions from the Sherbrooke Symphony Orchestra, the Ensemble contemporain de Montréal, the Arthur-LeBlanc Quartet, the Québec Youth Orchestras Association, and the Musica Nova Ensemble. Desjardins is currently Assistant Conductor of the New Music Ensemble at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he also is on the academic faculty and teaches Music Theory and Musicianship. He has sung tenor solos in works such as Mozart's C Minor Mass and the premiere of the final version of the opera *Young Caesar* by Lou Harrison.

Bartholdiade was a commission from the Sherbrooke Symphony Orchestra and was completed through a grant from the Canada Arts Council. The piece is dedicated to Stéphane Laforest, Artistic Director, and Monique Choquette-Habel, former General Manager of the orchestra. Stéphane Laforest gave Desjardins the initial idea for the work. In the Fall of 2001, he had told Desjardins that his piece would open the concert and would be immediately followed by Mendelssohn's Italian Symphony. Desjardins decided that he had to use exactly the same instrumentation as the Italian Symphony, and write an eight to ten minute piece somewhat in the shape of an overture. These parameters immediately anchored his inspiration. He decided to conceive of a piece that would anticipate the symphony, as if it did not yet exist, or rather, as if it was still in Mendelssohn's mind before he had started writing it. The general impression is that of a musical puzzle where the pieces are scattered in time, leaving it up to the listener to piece it all together. The title comes from the composer's second name, "Bartholdy."

Piano Concerto in F* *George Gershwin (1898-1937)

Leonard Bernstein compared George Gershwin to Mozart, both “naturals” that died young. Growing up on the streets of Brooklyn, Gershwin was athletic and scrappy, always earning poor grades in school and playing hooky whenever he could. He got neighbors to sign notes from teachers to his parents and even had his older brother Ira pose as his father in meetings with teachers. He discovered the piano, found a good teacher in 1912, and by 1915 demanded that he be allowed to quit school to work for a music publisher as a pianist and "song plugger." This made him one of the youngest pianists in Tin Pan Alley. The rest is history. He soon became a fixture on the Broadway scene.

The concerto premiered in 1925, a year of many public successes for Gershwin. In this year, George and Ira and their families moved into a spacious 5-storey house on 103rd street in Manhattan. The house was so full of activity at all hours that Gershwin took to renting a room at a hotel several blocks away to get some privacy in which to compose. After accepting the commission for the concerto, he set out to find out what a concerto was and purchase some textbooks on orchestration.

At Carnegie Hall, where the premiere was to take place, the first rehearsal began with a Glazunov symphony. After a break, a run-through of the concerto with Gershwin at the piano changed the atmosphere completely, getting the stiff and staid members of the orchestra to let themselves go and swing with the music. The form of the concerto depends on Gershwin's innate skill in melodic writing rather than stiff, traditional formats. His overall outline for the piece listed the following movements: 1. Rhythm; 2. Melody [Blues]; 3. More rhythm. He described the first movement as being “in sonata form, but...” The concerto was received well at its premiere and has become part of standard symphonic repertoire.

El Mirador (world premiere)* *Paul Dooley

Paul M. Dooley is a composer, pianist, and percussionist currently working for his Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Michigan where he is the Graduate Student Instructor in Electronic Music. He was born and raised in Santa Rosa and began composing music at age 12. Paul earned a degree in music composition and a second bachelor's degree in mathematics from the University of Southern California. His compositions take inspiration from dance, nature & travel. *El Mirador* (2010), about Paul's travels to ancient Mayan ruins in Guatemala, was named the winner of the Pacific Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble's American Composers Competition, which resulted in a commission for that group.

El Mirador is an ancient Mayan city deep in the jungles of northern Guatemala. The largest of all Mayan cities, it once supported a population of over one hundred thousand people. *El Mirador* represents the height of Mayan culture but was abandoned in the 9th century. Today the ruins are nearly inaccessible. The ambitious backpacker must travel for three days in the jungle before coming upon the outer complex. The jungle has completely taken back this land, and one might mistake the world's tallest Mayan pyramid for a small mountain. This composition is a meditation on the grandeur and mystery surrounding *El Mirador*. Dooley wished to convey the vastness and confinement he experienced when he journeyed to this once-great city.

Symphonic Dances from West Side Story* *Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

Bernstein burst onto the serious music scene as a prodigy and piano virtuoso. He ascended to his post as music director of the New York Philharmonic at a very young age. His symphonic mentor Serge Koussevitsky disapproved of his interests in popular music, but Bernstein would not be held back. He

composed comic operas and musicals, performed jazz, conducted piano concertos from the keyboard, made educational TV shows about music, and more.

With music by Bernstein, lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, and choreography by Jerome Robbins, *West Side Story* had solid origins. The story is *Romeo and Juliet* in New York, with the rival street gangs Jets and Sharks instead of Montagues and Capulets. The plot follows the *Romeo and Juliet* story exactly except that the female lead, Maria, does not die in the end.

The *Symphonic Dances* fuses the big tunes from the show into a symphonic poem, unrestricted by the limited possibilities of the Broadway pit orchestra. This piece is a powerful emotional roller-coaster ride. The music perfectly paints the moods of the story: the tension and hatred between rival urban gangs, tender affection between two people from opposing sides, the inevitable violent confrontations, and the heartbreaking conclusion.