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Currents: Song and Dance

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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CURRENTS

the ensemble for new-music in residence at the
University of Richmond

Fred Cohen *Music Director*

presents

Song and Dance

March 21, 1997
Camp Concert Hall
8:00 pm

Program

Octet (1994)

Ross Bauer

Mr. West, Mr. Hammel, Ms. Roberts, Ms. Lazar, Ms.
Holmes, Mr. Kivrak, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Bernat, Mr. Cohen

Last Contrabass in Las Vegas (1971)

Eugene Kurz

Ms. Cable, Mr. Bernat

Four Poems of A.R. Ammons (1992)

Steven Stucky

1. Consignee
2. Mansion
3. Songlet
4. Some Months Ago

Mr. Smith, Ms. Werrell, Mr. West, Ms. Roberts, Mr. Kirvak,
Mr. Wilson, Mr. Bernat, Mr. Cohen

Song and Dance (1997) *premiere*

Larry Bell

1. First Dance
2. Sing-a-long
3. Call and Response
4. Last Dance

Ms. Werrell, Ms. Gerster, Mr. West, Mr. Hammel, Ms.
Roberts, Mr. Davison, Mr. Ellithorpe, Ms. Lazar, Ms.
Holmes, Mr. Kivrak, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Bernat, Mr. Hanson,
Mr. Cohen

CURRENTS

Patricia Werrell *flute, alto flute, piccolo*
Sandra Gerster *oboe*
Charles West *clarinet, bass clarinet*
Bruce Hammel *bassoon*

Amy Roberts *French horn*
Michael Davison *trumpet*
Robert Ellithorpe *trombone*

Paul Hanson *piano*

Terri Lazar *violin I*
Carol Holmes *violin II*
Osman Kivrak *viola*
James Smith *cello*
Mark Bernat *contrabass*

Jennifer Cable *vocalist*
Jim Smith *baritone*

Fred Cohen *conductor and music director*

Program Notes

ROSS BAUER: OCTET

Octet was composed during the summer of 1994. I'd always wanted to write for the instrumentation of the Schubert Octet (op. post. 166, D.803) and, when a projected premiere was suddenly put off for a year, I had my chance. I also wanted to write a chamber piece in which my wife, Carla Wilson, could perform. The Octet is dedicated to her. Although by no means a bassoon concerto, the Octet begins and ends with prominent bassoon music and has some along the way as well. While the violin, clarinet and horn also have solo passages, Octet is fundamentally an ensemble work -- one that's predominantly orchestral in conception.

The piece divides into six large sections of different lengths each having further internal divisions. These large sections are defined through various means -- tempo, rate of harmonic motion, texture, register, density, instrumentation, etc. One thing which these sections all share, however, is their upbeat endings. While there are downbeat accents at key points throughout, they're invariably at beginnings and in middles. So, when the final chord appears five measures before the end, it provides a very strong and much needed sense of closure. Although basically a through-composed work, the opening returns in varied form to mark the beginning of the sixth and final section.

--Ross Bauer

STEVEN STUCKY: FOUR POEMS OF A.R. AMMONS

A.R. Ammons, my colleague and friend at Cornell University, was born in Whiteville, North Carolina. Winner of a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Bollingen Prize, a MacArthur Prize, and countless other honors, he received his second National Book Award in 1993 for the book-length poem *Garbage*. When he won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1981 for *Lake Country Effect*, the citation described Archie Ammons as standing "in the tradition of Wordsworth, Emerson, and Whitman," creating poetry "remarkable for its radiant density of argument and feeling."

In 1991 the Koussevitsky Music Foundation commissioned me to write a new chamber work for the Society of New Music. With Sanford Sylvan's beautiful interpretations of new works by Adams and Harbison ringing in my ear, I decided to satisfy the commission with a song cycle for baritone. It was only after I had read hundreds of poems by other American poets that I realized that Ammons is, in fact, my favorite poet, and I returned with pleasure to his work as a source of inspiration and nourishment for my music.

The dark, even romantic ensemble of baritone and six mostly low instruments came first; the poems, all dealing with death, were chosen to fit the sound world I imagined for that ensemble. The first performance was given in Syracuse on 28 March 1993 by baritone William Black, with the Society for New Music conducted by Edward Murray.

--Steven Stucky

LARRY BELL: SONG AND DANCE

Song and Dance was commissioned by Fred Cohen for the CURRENTS ensemble at the University of Richmond. Written during the last two weeks of 1996, it was completed on New Years' Eve 1997. The work is scored for an ensemble of thirteen soloists: woodwind quartet, brass trio, string quintet, and piano.

The titles of the work's four movements-First Dance, Sing-a-long, Call and Response, and Last Dance-give the listener a sense of the popular style, or vernacular idiom, that influenced the composition. The titles also suggest a kind of participation asked of the listener; an invitation to sing and dance with the performers.

The phrase Song and Dance can also mean a put-on, something not quite what it appears to be. This *Song and Dance* is partly wistful, partly comic, playfully criss-crossing the border between seriousness and fun.

--Larry Bell

Ross Bauer (born 1951, Ithaca, New York) studied at New England Conservatory and at Brandeis University. His teachers have included John Heiss, Arthur Berger, Martin Boykan, and Luciano Berio. He has taught at Brandeis and Stanford Universities, and is currently teaches composition and is Director of Empyrean Ensemble (formerly the UC Davis Contemporary Music Players) at the University of California, Davis. A founding member of Boston's Griffin Music Ensemble, he's remained active in the performance and promotion of contemporary music, conducting numerous commissioned works and premieres. His honors as a composer include a Guggenheim Fellowship, Koussevitzky and Fromm Foundation Commissions, Composition Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and Fellowships to Tanglewood, the Wellesley Composers Conference, and MacDowell Colony. He recently completed a chamber work for the New York New Music Ensemble (recorded by them for their CD of his works on Centaur) and a work for solo violin and orchestra for the Santa Cruz County Symphony (to be premiered on March 22 at the Civic Auditorium, Santa Cruz).

Steven Stucky is widely recognized as one of the leading American composers of his generation. His music is praised for its beauty of sound, imaginative use of color, and clarity of large-scale form. In recent years Mr. Stucky has satisfied commissions from the symphony orchestras of Minnesota, Philadelphia, Chicago, Baltimore and Saint Louis. Mr. Stucky has been composer-in-residence of the Los Angeles Philharmonic since 1988. He appeared as guest composer with CURRENTS in March, 1993.

Recognized by the Chicago Tribune as "a major talent," composer **Larry Thomas Bell** has been awarded the Rome Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Rockefeller Foundation grant, and the Charles Ives Award from the American Academy and National Institute of Arts and Letters. His music has been commissioned and performed by the Juilliard String Quartet, the Seattle Symphony, the RAI Orchestra of Rome, and played throughout the United States, and in Russia, Italy, Great Britain, France, Slovakia, Jamaica, New Zealand, and Canada. Bell's Sacred Symphonies is recorded on Vienna Modern Masters (VMM). His Piano Sonata appears on North/South Recordings and the Piano Concerto was recently released on VMM, both with Bell as soloist. Scores are published by the American Composers Alliance and Casa Rustica Publications.

Also a pianist, Bell has concertized in New York, Boston, Italy, Bulgaria, Austria, Japan, the Midwest, and the Southeast. He has premiered works by Vincent Persichetti and Frederic Rzewski. Bell received his doctorate from The Juilliard School, where he studied composition with Persichetti and Roger Sessions. He has taught on the faculties of the Juilliard School's Pre-College Division, the Boston Conservatory, and the New England Conservatory.

Best known in Richmond for his prominence in musical theater roles, **Jim Smith** recently appeared in *Oil City Symphony* at the Barksdale Theatre and *Shenadoah* at Swift Creek Mill Playhouse, and before that in *The Secret Garden* and *The Fantasticks*. Other noteworthy credits are as musical director for Barksdale productions of *Mikado* and *Nunsense* and as baritone soloist in Requiem settings by Brahms, Faure, Duruflé, and Schubert presented in the "Music for a Great Space" series. Most recently he appeared as a guest soloist with *Affetti Musicali* and Chorus Ad Hoc in Carrissimi's *Jepthe*. As assistant conductor of Opera Memphis and music director of Southern Opera Theater, he sang roles including Marcello in *La Bohème* and Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*. He is a member of the adjunct singing faculty at the University of Richmond.

Jennifer Cable has performed throughout the United States and in Europe in solo repertoire ranging from the Renaissance through the twentieth century. In addition to opera and oratorio, Ms. Cable has sung with many chamber music ensembles, including Tragicomedia Musica Nova, the Kennedy Center Chamber Players, the Richmond Chamber Players, the Richmond Symphony and CURRENTS. A 1993 founding member of the baroque chamber ensemble *Affetti Musicali*, Ms. Cable has recorded for Word Records and the Contemporary Record Society;. She is currently studying with Beverley Johnson in New York City and serves on the faculty at the University of Richmond.

Mark Bernat trained at the Julliard School and was engaged by Zubin Mehta for the Israel Philharmonic upon completion of his diploma. He has taught such distinguished institutions as the Oberlin Conservatory and the University of Texas at Austin. A internationally recognized promoter of the contrabass, Mr. Bernat's transcription of the complete J. S. Bach Suites for Solo Cello (transcribed for the contrabass) are available on International Music. His recording of the Suites will be available on MAD records during spring '97.

CURRENTS is the University of Richmond's resident professional ensemble for contemporary music. Founded in 1986 by Fred Cohen, its goals are to bring fresh, spirited, and progressive programming of 20th century music to concertgoers in Richmond and throughout central Virginia, and to commission and perform new works by emerging and established composers of concert music.

CURRENTS is the only professional contemporary music ensemble in Virginia. Guest performers with CURRENTS have included vocalists Lisa Burrs, Mimmi Fulmer, Carmen Pelton, David Pelton, and Christine Schadeberg, oboist Heinz Holliger, and members of the Shanghai String Quartet.

Since its inception, CURRENTS has performed three to six programs each year at a variety of locations in the central Virginia area, including the Carpenter Center for the Performing Arts, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Jefferson Hotel, Washington and Lee University, the College of William and Mary, Randolph-Macon College, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the University of Richmond. All performances are reviewed by the press, and many are recorded for broadcast on WCVE-FM, Richmond's Public Broadcasting Station. had its New York debut at the Katherine Bache Miller Theater in 1993. CURRENTS made its debut on the Virginia Museum's Fast/Forward series during the 1994-95 season with a program of works by Morton Feldman in conjunction with an exhibition of paintings by Philip Guston. CURRENTS first CD was issued in December, 1995, on the Centaur Label (Centaur CRC 2248).

First performances include works commissioned by CURRENTS by composers Thomas Albert, Richard Becker, Allan Blank, Fred Cohen, David Cope, Joel Feigin, Ben Johnston, Timothy Kloth, Jonathan Kramer, Walter Ross and Vivian Fine. CURRENTS has also presented the American premieres of works by a number of prominent contemporary Eastern European composers, including Edison Denisov, Sofia Gubaidulina, György Kurtág, and Alfred Schnikke.

CURRENTS has received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the Sydney and Frances Lewis Foundation, Downtown Presents, the Carpenter Foundation, Meet the Composer, Inc., the University of Richmond, local and regional art agencies, and private donations.

As a conductor and artistic director, **Fred Cohen** has directed orchestras and new-music ensembles for more than ten years. During 1978-80 he was the director of Ensemble Nova in Santa Cruz, CA. He founded the Cornell Contemporary Ensemble and directed it from 1982 to 1986, and founded CURRENTS in 1986. Since 1980, Mr. Cohen has directed over sixty-five first performances of music in all media, including opera, ballet, and computer-generated works. Mr. Cohen has appeared as a guest conductor with the Richmond Symphony, the Williamsburg Sinfonia, the New York new-music ensembles *Musician's Accord* and American Opera Projects, the Philadelphia new-music ensemble *Relache*, among other musical organizations. Mr. Cohen appears as conductor on the Centaur and North/South Recording labels.

Mr. Cohen is Associate Professor of Music at the University of Richmond where he conducts the University of Richmond Orchestra and is director of the Music Technology Lab.

next CURRENTS concert: March 26, 1997

8:00 pm Camp Concert Hall

premiere of *Pygmalion and Galatea*, music to sculpture and poetry of Mark Rhodes by composers Steven Addiss, Will Averitt, Richard Becker, Josh Camp, Fred Cohen, David Cope, David Froom, Jonathan Gibson, Stephan Prock.