



## Notes From The Podium

Dear Friends,

I think you will find this a very interesting and unusual concert. It certainly is eclectic. I'm tempted to say "odd!"

The common elements are percussion and chorus, but beyond that we are covering a wide range of musical styles. We have some pieces, like those by Paulus, Argento and Maslanka, which you might say are "typical" Pro Musica works: beautiful, rich, artistic, full of wonderful harmonies and melodies, interesting texts, and never before heard in this area.

Then we have some pieces that are as much dances as they are music. No, they are way more about dance than about choral music. These are the *Kyrie* and *Sanctus* by Glenn McClure, and if you aren't dancing in the aisles during these than you are a WAY too sedate audience!

Somewhere in the middle is Bob Cohen's piece titled *Of Eternity Considered As A Closed System*, which has elements of the "typical" APM work – if such a thing exists – combined with some very odd pieces on some extraordinary texts, and lots of humor. You will want to laugh. This set also celebrates both the holiday of Halloween and the baseball World Series. I'd like to take complete credit for performing this piece at exactly the right time, but it's quite by accident.

And then there's the slightly bombastic and unrelentingly rhythmic work by Carl Orff, the *Praelusio* from the *Catulli Carmina*, which, like his more familiar *Carmina Burana*, falls into a category by itself. If it wasn't so much fun it might feel like you were being musical attacked. Don't take it seriously. It's quite scandalous.

### **Praelusio (Prelude) from *Catulli Carmina***

*Catulli Carmina* (1942) is the second of a set of three "scenic cantatas" by the Bavarian Carl Orff. The first of the *Trionfi* was the well-known *Carmina Burana* (1937); the last was *Trionfo di Afrodite* (1952).

The texts for *Catulli Carmina* consist of erotic love poetry in the guise of a story by the Roman poet Catullus (84-c.55 BC). Catullus was one of the first great love poets; about 116 poems of his survive. Catullus was in love with a beautiful, married patrician named Clodia. Wishing that she be aware of his love, which he could not openly declare, he communicated it to her in the form of subtle (and not so subtle!) poems. Orff's style consists of driving rhythms and much repetition. The piece experiments with repeated phrases and syncopated rhythms even more so than *Carmina Burana*, which we will perform next April. This prelude has been shortened from the original for this performance.

### **I Hate And I Love (Odi Et Amo)**

From the AMG All Music Guide:

*I Hate and I Love* is a song cycle for chorus and percussion based on the Latin poetry of Catullus [the same poet as the previous work]. This touching and exciting music was written by Dominick Argento, who is one of the best vocal composers not only in the U.S., but also in the world. Argento composed *I Hate and I Love* for the tenth anniversary of the Dale Warland Singers using his own English translation of the Latin poetry...Like Orff, Argento chose to use percussion to accompany his Catullus choral settings. Unlike Orff, Argento does not use the percussion primarily for rhythmic purposes or to create powerful sounds. He chose only percussion and human voices for this work because this combination was known to the ancients and avoided “modern sounding” instruments.

### **Of Eternity Considered As A Closed System**

Composer Robert S. Cohen has written music for orchestra, chamber ensemble, chorus, dance and theatre. *Of Eternity Considered as a Closed System* for soloists, chorus and orchestra based on seven poems by the late Rochester poet Hyam Plutzik, was premiered February 2007 at Carnegie Hall as part of a concert sponsored by the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation entitled “Partners of Hope.”

The composer writes:

This work ...is a musical dramatization of seven poems [five of which are performed today] by Hyam Plutzik, recognized by many as one of the great unheralded poets of the 20th century. Plutzik, nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1961, was the John H. Deane Professor of Poetry and Rhetoric at the University of Rochester. In selecting the poems, I wanted to choose a variety of poetic images and personas—some literal, some paradoxical, and some metaphorical—that would in total form a unifying arc. My approach was to imagine each poem/movement as an exploration of individual aspects of the poet’s own persona and points of view. Because many of Hyam Plutzik’s poems are serious, enigmatic, and mysterious, I wanted to balance those musical settings with contrasting ones—occasionally drawing on elements of musical theater— that contained elements of humor and irony. Plutzik’s belief that “there is a veil over the surface of things,” and that “occasionally, in a fortunate moment, from some object in itself trivial—a tree, a stone, a house, a hand—the veil is brushed away, and we see the shape of truth” very much describes the challenge of finding a musical vocabulary with which to both illuminate and add meaning to his poems without losing the beauty and impact of the language. As in much great poetry, the text provides as many questions as answers. While some of the poems revealed themselves in a more concrete way, others were far more elusive, requiring me to work on a more abstract and intuitive level. It seems to me that much of the dark sense of irony not only was an integral aspect of his personality but also stems from the period during World War II when Hyam—a Jew—was stationed in England and saw first-hand the early hints of the nightmare of darkness and death, and the ultimate horror that came after. Those elements came to inhabit the vast majority of his poems, alongside mythology, science, and the nature of time.

### **A Litany for Courage and the Seasons (1988) for Chorus, Clarinet and Vibraphone**

From the composer’s website:

Joseph Campbell, author of *The Power of Myth* and *The Masks of God*, wrote: “We have come forth from the one ground of being as manifestations in the field of time. The field of time is a kind of shadow play over a timeless ground.”

In music we normally think of sound as the focus of attention, the positive value. Musical sound occurs against a field of silence. If the perception is reversed, musical sound can be seen as a way of framing and of shaping the perception of silence.

Richard Beale's poetry grows out of the silence of the earth and the universe. Each poem rests on this silence and draws its power from it. Each of my six songs is finally a meditation on silence, a way of shaping the perception of the timeless ground.

This work was commissioned by the SUNY-Geneseo Chamber Singers

### **St. Francis in the Americas: A Caribbean Mass**

Glenn McClure is a composer and Arts Integration Consultant, currently serving as an adjunct faculty member at the Eastman School of Music and at SUNY Geneseo. His compositions have enjoyed a wide audience in the US and abroad. Mr. McClure's work was featured by the St. Olaf Choir at the culminating concert of the World Symposium of Choral Music. His oratorio, *The Starry Messenger* was featured on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered."

Mr. McClure's main compositional interest lies in the mixing of classical music with ethnic music traditions. His choral works use many languages, including Vietnamese, Lakota, and Nahuatl. He is very interested in the use of non-traditional languages and music styles from many world cultures. He is experienced in dealing not only with the technical aspects of non European languages, but also in the ethno musicological concerns involved in writing works that include traditional musicians.

Some notes from the composer:

*St. Francis in the Americas: A Caribbean Mass* celebrates the marriage of Latin American cultures and the spiritual legacy of the medieval Italian saint, Francis of Assisi. Followers of "Il Poverello," the little poor man from Assisi, have left their mark on this hemisphere with cities named for the saint... and customs such as the Christmas nativity scenes we see at holiday time. This concert mass sets several of Francis' writings into languages and musical styles of the New World. The instrumentation features ...percussion instruments from Latin American traditions.

#### **Santo**

The "Santo" (Sanctus) sets one of St. Francis's poems in the liturgical context. The music includes references to a traditional Mexican melody and a "comparsa" rhythm. The driving rhythm of this piece is reminiscent of a great deal of Latin American liturgical music. Whereas Northern European liturgical music often emphasizes the solemnity of prayer, Latin American and African liturgical music often emphasizes the lively, dance-like quality of prayer.

#### **Kyrie**

This piece weaves the Greek text "Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy" and a prayer written by Francis of Assisi into the fabric of a Caribbean samba. Francis wrote this prayer at a pivotal moment of conversion. After he had given up the lavish life of rich young man, he prayed before a crucifix in broken down church that commanded him to go "rebuild my church." This humble prayer was the beginning of Francis' life of service, just as the Kyrie marks the humble beginning of our liturgy, a liturgy that calls us to a life of service.

~ David Griggs-Janower