

atlanta  chamber players

2010 - 2011
35th Anniversary Season

Sunday, 17 October 2010 - 3:00 PM
"CHAMBER MUSIC IN ART SPACES"
Walter Hill Auditorium, High Museum of Art

"Rapido! Take Two!!"

Program Notes

Arthur William Foote

Salem, Massachusetts 5 March 1853-Boston, 8 April 1937

Although a "New England School" of American composers never really existed, there were certainly a number of eminent and influential composers based in Boston and New York who flourished at the turn of the century, including Foote. These composers were a conservative lot, devoted to the forms and methods of the late Romantic era. Foote was entirely trained in the United States, though his instruction strongly favored the dominant European style of the time. He entered Harvard University in 1870 where he became a student of John Knowles Paine. Foote received a Master of Arts degree in music in 1875--the first music student in American history to earn so advanced a degree from a domestic university, a distinguished achievement given the fact that all his contemporaries studied abroad. As a performer, Foote was an accomplished organist, joining Boston's First Unitarian Church in 1878 and serving there until 1910; he was a founding member of the American Guild of Organists in 1909 and served as its president until 1912.

Foote taught piano privately for many years and was active as a chamber musician before joining the faculty of the New England Conservatory in 1920, where he taught piano until his death. In addition to his many compositions--and he was widely published and performed during his lifetime--Foote also wrote two books on harmony. Arthur Foote was one of the most accomplished and distinguished professional musicians this nation has ever produced.

Piano Quartet in C Major, Opus 23

This piano quartet was completed in August of 1890 and is dedicated to fellow New Englander John Knowles Paine. The premiere took place the following 21 April in Boston, the composer at the piano. Although infrequently performed these days, it was quite popular during Foote's lifetime, being performed widely in the United States and Europe.

Perhaps the best description of this chamber music essay is by Nicholas Tawa, Foote's biographer, who wrote; "The piece makes a statement that is benevolent and compassionate rather than passionate. Foote makes no attempt to achieve the heroism of Beethoven, the sensuousness of Wagner, the nostalgic sadness of Brahms, or the hysteria of Tchaikovsky...Foote feels there is room in humankind's experience for a long stretch of quietude and repose that is relatively free from high turbulence, mental agitation, and emotional pressure. The quartet inhabits an expressive domain that is strictly the composer's own." The

opening movement is lively, but lacking in what one commentator has termed "German angst." The scherzo is vivacious and spritely. The leisurely slow movement is one of Foote's most soulful and songful. The finale is forceful, almost bustling, with an abundance of material, including an old hymn and the requisite fugato passage.

---Notes by Edmund Trafford

Rapido! Composition Contest Southeastern Finalists

Alan Elkins holds degrees in viola performance from Florida State University (B.M. 2007) and music composition from Bowling Green State University (M.M. 2009). His composition teachers include Elaine Lillios, Burton Beerman, Mark Wingate, and Jim David.

His works have been performed throughout the eastern United States, including performances by flautist Clark Barnes, the BGSU Steel Drum Ensemble, the BGSU Early Music Ensemble, and the Atlanta Chamber Players (in the 2009 Rapido! competition.) As a violist, he has performed with orchestras and professional ensembles throughout the north Florida region, and, as an active proponent of new music, has premiered several solo and chamber works. When not performing in a classical setting, he enjoys improvising with the worship team at Ooltewah United Methodist Church. Alan Elkins currently serves on faculty at the School of Music at Lee University in Cleveland, TN. His music is published through Purple Frog Press.

Strange Journey

I. Secluded Path

II. Uncharted Territory

III. Respite

Music has been used for centuries to tell stories, depict events, or otherwise recall some specific aspect of the human experience. *Strange Journey*, however, was given its title after the piece was already finished, and so any specific meaning ascribed to the piece would have been absent from the compositional process.

Not to say that writing it wasn't a strange journey in and of itself; the piece came together in large, uneven spurts, with several of my original ideas being abandoned during the second week. From a musical standpoint, the stylistic shifts within the first and second movements seem to fit the title, since the work eventually reaches a point of rest in the midst of stark, sudden contrasts. I will, however, leave it to the listeners' imaginations to determine the nature of this journey for themselves, in keeping with the spirit of the work's conception.

--Notes by Alan Elkins

Jamie Keesecker currently resides in Durham, North Carolina, where he is a James B. Duke Fellow pursuing a Ph.D. at Duke University. He holds a Master's of Music Degree in composition from the University of Oregon (2009) and a B.Mus in composition from the University of Arizona (2006). His music includes works for a variety of instrumental and vocal combinations ranging from small chamber settings to large symphonic ensembles. His works have been performed throughout the United States and abroad, by such talents as NYC's *Percussia*, *So Percussion*, trumpeter Jonathon Clarke of the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the *Eugene Contemporary Chamber Ensemble*, the *Duke New Music Ensemble*, and the *Amalgam Brass Ensemble* of NC. Recently, the California based horn quartet *QUADRE: The Voice of Four Horns* recorded a composition of his to be featured on their new, soon to be released album. Jamie is the recipient of the 2010 Young Composer Fellowship from the Monadnock Music Festival in New

Hampshire, where he recently spent a week in residence, overseeing the premiere of two new works. In addition to composing, Jamie is active as a hornist, performing in new music settings whenever possible. You can visit his website at www.jamiekeeseckercomposer.com.

One-Minute Recipes - COLLECT ALL SIX!

I. Baking Pancakes (Skipping Rocks)

II. Pocket-sized Passacaglia

III. Minimal Effort

IV. Help Me With This Thing for a Minute

V. Probably Cirrus

VI. Rapido!

As part of the Rapido! composition contest, the participants were given the option to use one or more of Alexander Calder's sculptures, including his 1973 Three Up, Three Down (located just outside the High Museum of Art) as a possible inspiration. While my piece shares little with Calder's sculpture in terms of aesthetics, one of the fundamental organizational principles used in the sculpture (that there are six distinct parts that serve a similar structural purpose while exhibiting their own unique characteristics) influenced the planning stages of my approach to this set of miniatures.

The basic premise behind my piece is that there are six individual movements that each showcase a particular character while sharing a structural commonality (in that each movement is one minute in duration). This could also be seen as a project in which the objective is to fill a minute in six different ways. I find this particularly interesting because it highlights the differences between the ways in which a listener experiences musical time versus real time. In other words, even though each miniature will be roughly the same duration, one might seem longer or shorter than the others based on the musical factors contained within.

The title of the piece, One-Minute Recipes, carries the analogy one step further, since a cookbook could be seen as a collection of similarly functioning components that each exhibit their own flavors and textures. I also find musical miniatures to be easily digestible, and similar to dim sum or tapas in that you get to sample many different things, and if one particular item is not to your liking, you need not worry about it, as there are plenty of others that might suit your fancy.

- -Notes by Jamie Keesecker

Piotr Szewczyk is an award-winning violinist and composer. He has been a violinist in the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra in Florida since 2007, and is the Winner of the 2008 Jacksonville Symphony Fresh Ink - Florida Composers' Competition. Before joining JSO Mr. Szewczyk completed a three year fellowship at the New World Symphony in Miami Beach under Michael Tilson Thomas where he served as a rotating concertmaster and was a winner of the 2006 New World Symphony Concerto Competition.

Mr. Szewczyk is an active performer and proponent of new music and is the creator and performer of the critically-acclaimed Violin Futura Project, a series of recitals comprised of new, short, exciting and innovative solo violin pieces written and dedicated to him by over 40 renowned composers from USA, Germany, England, Japan, Australia and Mexico. As a composer, Mr. Szewczyk has received numerous awards, including those from American Composers Forum, Society of Composers, British Trombone Society, VoxNovus 60x60 Project, Fauxharmonic Adagio Contest, UPBEAT Hvar - Croatia and ACCENT Competition at Music X Festival. Mr. Szewczyk's music has been performed by the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, New World Symphony, Ensemble GREEN (Los Angeles), ALIAS Ensemble (Nashville), Sybarite Chamber Players (NYC), Trio Archetto (Poland), Degas Quartet, ACCORD Quartet, International Double Reed Conference, OWU/NOW Festival, Santa Fe New Music,

Colorado Music Festival and many others, and was featured on NPR Performance Today and CBS Early Show.

Mr. Szewczyk holds a double Masters degree in violin and composition from University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music where he studied violin with Kurt Sassmanshaus, Piotr Milewski and Dorothy Delay and composition with Joel Hoffman, Michael Fiday, Henry Gwiazda, Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon and Darrell Handel.

More information at: www.VeryNewMusic.com

Images from a Journey

1. Through a Prism
2. Moonlight Passacaglia
3. Night's Embrace
4. Gypsy Ballroom

Images from a Journey for Flute, Clarinet, Cello and Piano by Piotr Szewczyk is set in four short movements that capture four contrasting characters and scenes.

The first movement, *Through a Prism*, has a striking rhythmic drive with motivic material rapidly scattered through the extreme registers of each instrument, like light dispersing through a prism. The four-bar theme in the middle, surrounded by a steady groove, enters in a fugato manner through all instruments and is again transformed through the various registers and colors.

The second movement, *Midnight Passacaglia*, is a slowly unfolding meditation on the beauty and intricacy of the night and how it affects our perception of the world. It is inspired by the phenomenon of our eyes adjusting to darkness and the world revealing itself to our eyes as we begin to notice details in very different ways than in daylight.

The third movement, *Night's Embrace*, is inspired by our innate fear of complete darkness and how our remaining senses attempt to create an understanding of our surroundings. The darkness and unsettling feelings are expressed by the bass clarinet and alto flute in their lowest registers, supported by dark, ominous sonorities in piano.

The fourth movement, *Gypsy Ballroom*, is a wild, unabashed dance inspired by what I imagined would be a group of fun-loving gypsies unleashing their energy, creativity and spontaneity on an elegant ballroom dance and ripping the politeness to shreds.

---Notes by Piotr Szewczyk