

The Bombyx Brass Collective

ROMANTIC MASTERS

December 3, 2024, 7PM

Bombyx Center for Arts & Equity

We are pleased to welcome Juli Sansoucy as our Acting Music Director and Principal Conductor. Our first performance of the 2024/2025 season will be a challenging and delightful program featuring works from the Romantic Period to the present. The group continues to rotate in new players which join a core collection of BBC musicians dedicated to inclusion while striving for the highest level of musical artistry.

As always, admission to the ensembles' performances is free of charge, but donations are always gratefully accepted, with all proceeds going to support future programming and advocacy in the community.

The Program

The Star-Spangled Banner

Smith/O'Loughlin

The Star-Spangled Banner is the national anthem of the United States. The lyrics come from Defence of Fort M'Henry, a poem written in 1814 by the 35-year-old lawyer and amateur poet Francis Scott Key after witnessing the bombardment of Fort McHenry by British ships of the Royal Navy in the Chesapeake Bay during the Battle of Fort McHenry in the War of 1812.

The poem was set to the tune of a popular British song written by John Stafford Smith for the Anacreontic Society, a men's social club in London. Sean O'Laughlin, Principal Pops Conductor of the Victoria Symphony and the Symphoria in Syracuse, composed this for the Portland Trailblazers.

On a Hymnsong of Philip Bliss

Holsinger/Prentice

Horatio Spafford, a Presbyterian layman, planned a European trip with his family in 1873, but unexpected business kept him in Chicago as his wife and four daughters sailed on the S.S. Ville du Havre. Short of Wales, the ship collided with another and sank quickly. Once ashore, Mrs. Spafford cabled her husband, "Saved alone." Spafford penned text out of grief that focused on the redemptive work of Christ, "It is well with my soul...". Philip Bliss wrote music for the text.

Symphony No. 5

Mahler/Mehta

Trauermarsch

On February 24, 1901, after a long day conducting performances of both Bruckner's Fifth and The Magic Flute, Mahler fell seriously ill. The doctor told him that he had come within minutes of bleeding to death and that he should focus on rest and recovery. A sense of mortality sparked in this man who was already prone to obsession and hypochondria.

Mahler spent several months recuperating at his mountain villa in Maiernigg. It was here, in his “composing cottage”, that he began to channel his anxieties into the Fifth Symphony. By the end of the summer, the first three movements were complete.

The symphony begins when a trumpet solo introduces a funeral march. This mournful tune is interrupted twice: first by a raucous melody, and then by a calmer, more somber strain. The raucous melody returns and is gradually ushered out by the disappearing opening strains.

Avi Mehta’s arrangement of the Trauermarsch for brass choir is very well-crafted. Most of the original brass parts are intact but Mehta needed to invent ways to represent both the strings and woodwind sections of the original. He often pairs trumpets 3 and 4 (flugelhorn) with the euphoniums to capture the colors of the string section.

Commemorative Fanfare

John Cheetham

Commemorative Fanfare for Brass and Timpani was commissioned by the University of Missouri-Columbia College of Arts and Science for the University’s 1979 graduation exercises. A broad, declamatory style at the beginning will accentuate the deliberate character of the work.

Psalm for Brass

Boulanger/Kempf

Psalm 24 "La terre appartient à l'Éternel"

Had she not died at the age of 25, Lili Boulanger (1893-1918) would, by many accounts, be regarded as a major French composer. As it is, her compositional accomplishments overshadowed those of her better-known sister Nadia, who mostly gave up composition and devoted her life to training many American neo-classical composers.

“The Earth Belongs to the Eternal” was originally written for brass, organ, and choir. This arrangement by Bombyx member, Chris Kempf uses mainly the conical brass instruments such as horn and euphonium in the beginning for the men’s vocal parts. Midway through the work the trumpets are employed to emulate adding the women’s chorus.

March from "The Love of Three Oranges"

Prokofiev/Tull

The Love for Three Oranges, Op. 33, also known by its French language title L'amour des trois oranges, is a satirical opera by Sergei Prokofiev. Its French libretto was based on the Italian play L'amore delle tre melarance by Carlo Gozzi. The opera premiered at the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago, Illinois, on 30 December 1921.

Intermission

Marimba Spiritual from “Blast”

arr. Andrew Armstrong

This unique percussion trio brings together the vibrant and dynamic sounds of tom toms, bongos, and bass drum, blending rhythmic traditions from across cultures to create a powerful, immersive experience. Each instrument has its own distinct voice: the resonant and punchy tones of the tom toms, the bright and syncopated rhythms of the bongos, and the deep, grounding presence of the bass drum. The trio explores a range of textures and timbres, combining precision with spontaneity to create a percussive journey that is as diverse as it is exciting.

This Percussion Trio is a transcription by Andrew Armstrong from a performance by “The United States Army Field Band” written for accessory instruments. With each member contributing their own unique voice, the trio crafts a cohesive yet ever-evolving musical conversation that highlights the collective spirit of percussion while honoring the individual character of each instrument. This piece explores a variety of overarching rhythms that are split within each member to create a composite rhythm in passing around the trio with syncopated accent passages that create a melodic line between all 3 performers.

Please enjoy the Bombyx Trio featuring Lucas Reed, Lauren Chiodo, and Andrew Armstrong

Vienna Philharmonic Fanfare

Richard Strauss

Written in 1924, Strauss penned Fanfare für die Wiener Philharmoniker for the Vienna Philharmonic’s first benefit ball, which raised money for the musicians’ pension fund. The piece was originally performed while honored guests arrived at the event, and the work has subsequently been performed every year since at the Philharmonic’s annual ball.

Colonial Song

Grainger/Allen

Grainger initially wrote Colonial Song in 1911 as a piano piece as a gift to his mother, Rose. Of his piece, Grainger wrote that it was "an attempt to write a melody as typical of the Australian countryside. Although the piece seems to have been intended as part of a series of ‘Sentimentals,’ Grainger never wrote any other pieces in this series. Unlike many of Grainger's other compositions, the melodies of Colonial Song are not based on folk song but are original melodies.

Milestones

Robert Langenfeld

Commissioned by the University of Central Missouri Wind Ensemble, Milestones is a celebratory concert fanfare that encapsulates the excitement of a major accomplishment or event. In true fanfare style, the piece showcases the brass with brilliant rhythmic motifs and driving percussion parts.

Mancini for Brass Choir

Mancini/Meyer

Henry Mancini (1924 - 1994) was born in Cleveland, the son of Italian immigrants. His father, as steelworker, played the flute to relax after work and forced the young Henry to study music. As a youth, it was the music of Cecil B. DeMille's epic movies that impressed him most and, despite his father's wishes that Henry become a teacher, he decided to write music for the movies. He attended the Carnegie Institute of Technology and the Julliard School of Music, but his studies were cut short when he was drafted to fight in World War II. During the war, he got to know some of the musicians in Glenn Miller's band, leading to a job with the band after the war. Eventually, he began writing for radio shows and movies. He was a pioneer in moving film scores from heavy symphonic treatments to simpler arrangements employing jazz motifs.

Christmas in Brass

David Uber

David Uber (1921 – 2007) was a prolific American composer with over 400 brass, woodwind, and percussion works to his credit. His colorful career in music ranged from award-winning composer to world class trombonist, college professor and band director.

After graduating from Carthage College and receiving a scholarship to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, he served four years in the U.S. Navy Band. Following his military service, he obtained a Master of Arts and Doctor of Education from Columbia University. Dr. Uber was a professor of music at the College of New Jersey for 33 years, and also served on the faculties of Westminster Choir College, Princeton University, and the National Music Camp at Interlochen, where he was Director of Ensemble Music.

As a performing artist, Dr. Uber was the principal trombonist with the New York City Ballet Orchestra at Lincoln Center, the New York City Opera Orchestra, and the NBC Symphony Orchestra. For many years he was a solo trombonist with the NBC Television Opera, the Columbia Recording Symphony, the New York Brass Quintet, and the Contemporary Brass Quintet. His artistry may be heard on countless recordings under such eminent conductors as Igor Stravinsky, Leopold Stokowski, Sir Thomas Beecham, Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, Morton Gould, Arthur Fiedler, Fritz Reiner, and Bruno Walter.