

THE CRANE SYMPHONIC BAND

Program Notes • 17 November 2011

VOX POPULI

Richard Danielpour

Although a composer with a full docket of compositions to write, Danielpour made room in his busy schedule for this commission in part because it is a rare honor to be asked to provide music to inaugurate a new concert hall. He also took the assignment as a gesture of personal and professional friendship for Maestro Alfred Savia, who has been a loyal champion of Danielpour's work since 1992, when the Evansville Philharmonic performed his *First Light*. Since then, composer and conductor have kept in constant touch, and Maestro Savia programmed a second Danielpour work in Evansville, *Toward the Splendid City*, in 1996.

The Eykamp commission also gave Danielpour the opportunity to include in his catalog a short piece, less than ten minutes, which G. Schirmer, his publisher had been requesting. And he was challenged, he said, to write a piece that would be eminently playable. *Vox Populi*, he believes, is likely to sound more difficult than it actually is.

The Latin title *Vox Populi*, "voice of the people," reflects the fact that Danielpour began the piece in Italy in June, at a villa in Tuscany where he has composed for several years. There he set down the first draft in four days at intensive work. He then returned to the United States to begin a residency at the Marlboro Music Festival, where he began working on the orchestration during the first ten days of July. At the end of that month he finished the piece at Yaddo, an artists' community in Saratoga Springs, New York.

The title is also an allusion to the fact that Evansville is a place where the "voice of the people" means something, where people from all walks of life join together to make things happen, such as rescuing a historic theater and returning it to artistic usefulness.

Vox Populi is developed using traditional "classical" music techniques, but it is flavored with ideas and sounds and rhythms that are rooted in American popular music and jazz, which been the people's musical voice. And the definition of popular music is elastic enough here to include a large chronological sweep. There is even a "certain wink" in places, particularly in the brass writing, at the popular music of the 1920s, appropriate for a hall originally built in 1919.

The music itself is also traditional in the sense that, although it moves forward in time, it retains a certain internal nostalgia, remembering where it has been and alluding to its past. The form of the work can be characterized as an "arch," in the center of which the music turns back on itself, discards the accretions of its previous progress, and returns to its beginnings. In its musical structure *Vox Populi* is a veritable metaphor for the structure in which it is being premiered, the restored Victory Theatre.

Note from the G. Schirmer Web Site

AFTER A GENTLE RAIN

Anthony Iannaccone

After a Gentle Rain is a work in two contrasting movements – the first quiet, meditative and introverted and the second sparkling, dance-like and extroverted. The work is dedicated to Max Plank and the Eastern Michigan University Symphonic Band.

The first movement – **The Dark Green Glistens With Old Reflections** – begins with a gently rippling arpeggiated figure containing the main harmonic and melodic idea of the entire piece: two superimposed major triads. The figure subtly changes color as it migrates through various registers, spacings, and doublings. While the external shape of the sextuplet seems frozen, one can hear an internal, textural progression of changing resonance qualities. Against this backdrop is painted a wide spectrum of both dark and bright mixtures of soft brass, reeds, and percussion. Those colorful mixtures constantly redefine the background and foreground of this introverted scenario.

The play on words in the title suggests images of light reflecting off moist green foliage, in turn evoking reflections "off" old memories in a quiet, meditative context. Memories, images and colors become bolder and more powerful, culminate in a climax and gradually recede into the past with the same delicate afterglow of soft bell sounds heard in the opening measures.

The movement **Sparkling Air Bursts with Dancing Sunlight** is extroverted and dance-like in nature. The movement gallops with the joy and freshness that seems to fill the air after a gentle rain. The cleansed air sparkles with a sense of rebirth and the celebration of life.

Anthony Iannaccone began private musical studies at the age of seven. His BM and MM degrees are from the Manhattan School of Music, where he studies with Vittorio Giannini and David Diamond. His PhD degree is from the Eastman School of Music, where he studied composition with Samuel Adler and Musicology with Hendrik Van der Werf.

Note by Anthony Iannaccone

RUSSIAN CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Alfred Reed

Originally written in November 1944, *Russian Christmas Music* was first performed in December of that year at a special concert given in Denver, Colorado, by a select group of musicians from five of the leading service bands stationed in that area. Two years later the music was revised and somewhat enlarged, and in that form was one of the prize-winning works in the 1947 Columbia University contest for new serious music for symphonic band. First performances of this second version subsequently took place in 1948: the first by the Juilliard Band under Donald I. Moore, and the second by the Syracuse University Symphonic Band under Harwood Simmons, to whom the work was dedicated. Since then this music, although not previously published, has remained in the repertory of the concert band consistently and has established the composer as a prominent writer for this medium.

An ancient Russian Christmas Carol ("Carol of the Little Russian Children"), together with a good deal of original material and some motivic elements derived from the liturgical music of the Eastern Orthodox Church, forms the basis for this musical impression of Old Russia during the jubilant Christmas season. The work, although cast in a single, continuous movement, is in four distinct sections. These the composer originally subtitled: "Children's Carol," "Antiphonal Chant," "Village Song," and the closing "Cathedral Chorus." All of the resources of the modern symphonic band are drawn upon to create an almost overwhelming sound picture of tone color, power, and sonority.

Note by Alfred Reed

SUITE FOR BAND

Robert Washburn

Robert Washburn is Dean and Professor Emeritus and Senior Fellow in Music at the Crane School of Music. After completing his undergraduate studies at Potsdam he was awarded a Danforth Foundation Fellowship to complete a Ph.D. in composition at the Eastman School of Music where he worked with Howard Hanson, Bernard Rogers and Alan Hovhaness. Later studies included a summer at the Aspen Music School where he studied with Darius Milhaud, and a season in Paris with Nadia Boulanger. He also participated in seminars at the Sorbonne in Paris and at the University of Oxford in England.

Washburn received a Ford Foundation Grant permitting him to devote a year to composition and has received grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, the ALCOA Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Juilliard Repertory Project, and Meet the Composer. He is a fellow of the

MacDowell Colony and held a scholarship at the Bennington Composers Conference. Subsequently he was awarded a SUNY Foundation Summer Fellowship to compose *Symphony for Band*. Other honors have included the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, the Potsdam College Alumni Association's Minerva Award, and a SUNY Faculty Exchange Scholar appointment. His military service in the USAF included duty as chief arranger for the Air Force Band of the West and the Air Force Sinfonietta and he spent a year as a member of the San Antonio Symphony.

Washburn has had over 150 of his various works published by a variety of international publishing houses. He has written several articles that have appeared in both state and national publications.

Suite for Band was commissioned by the music department of East Meadow High School, Long Island, NY. It was composed for, and dedicated to the East Meadow High School Wind Ensemble, William Katz, director.

Although published in 1972 by Oxford Music, *Suite for Band* received its premiere in November of 1955 in Potsdam. Harry Phillips led the Crane Symphonic Band in the first performance.

GIVE US THIS DAY

David Maslanka

The words, "Give us this day," are, of course, from the Lord's Prayer, but the inspiration for this music is Bhuddist. I have recently read a book by the Vietnamese Bhuddist monk Thich Nhat Hahn (pronounced "Tick Nat Hahn") entitled *For a Future to be Possible*. His premise is that a future for the planet is only possible if individuals become deeply mindful of themselves, deeply connected to who they really are. While this is not a new idea, and something that is an ongoing struggle for everyone, in my estimation it is the issue for world peace. For me, writing music, and working with people to perform music, are two of those points of deep mindfulness.

Music makes the connection to reality, and by reality I mean a true awakeness and awareness. *Give Us This Day* gives us this very moment of awakeness and awareness so that we can build a future in the face of a most dangerous and difficult time.

I chose the subtitle, "Short Symphony for Wind Ensemble," because the music is not programmatic in nature. It has a full-blown symphonic character, even though there are only two movements. The music of the slower first movement is deeply searching, while that of the highly energized second movement is at times both joyful and sternly sober. The piece ends with a modal setting of the choral melody *Vater Unser in Himmelreich* (Our Father in Heaven) - No. 110 from the 371 four-part chorales by Johann Sebastian Bach.

Note by David Maslanka