



CLEVELAND
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PROGRAM NOTES

Imani Winds

Begins Streaming Online October 6, 2020

Safe with Sound: virtual conversations and music with featured artists

Quintet for Winds

John Harbison (b. 1938)

Composed: 1979

John Harbison's *Quintet for Winds* (1979) has become the new standard by which quintets test their mettle. Each of the five movements is highly individual in character, with the opening Intrada's arresting horn and bassoon unison soaring through the stratosphere of each instrument's range. The Romanza has moments of sensuality set against moments of comedy, and the Scherzo's breathless *moto perpetuo* features what can best be described as a musical relay-race between the clarinet, flute, and bassoon. The Finale's parody is highlighted by a drunken middle section that juxtaposes march-like figures in the oboe and horn, against a jesting clarinet line. In a stroke of brilliance, Harbison turns the voices of the group upside down throughout much of the quintet. The horn and bassoon traverse the peaks of their ranges, and the flute and oboe trace melodic lines through their lowest

registers. What results is an extremely “crunched” sound, with all members of the ensemble weaving their voices inside a similar register. Through this technique, Harbison takes a centuries old ensemble and creates an entirely new sound.

Composers note: I was determined to deal in mixtures rather than counterpoints, and to strive for a classical simplicity of surface—to maximize what I felt to be the great strength of the combination, the ability to present things clearly. The piece especially emphasizes mixtures and doublings and maintains a classically simple surface. It is extremely challenging to play, and one of the principal rewards of the piece has been the opportunity to work with a number of resourceful, inquisitive, and fearless wind players in the mutually beneficial expansion of their repertory.

Klezmer Dances

Traditional; arr. Gene Kavadlo

The term klezmer comes from a combination of Hebrew words: kley, meaning "a useful or prepared instrument, tool, or utensil" and zemer, meaning "to make music," so literally we have vessel of song or musical instrument. Initially, klezmer referred to musical instruments and was later broadened to refer—in a derogatory manner—to the musicians themselves. In the late 20th Century the word was used to identify a musical genre. Most klezmer songs are in several sections, sometimes with each in a different key and with sections frequently alternating between major and minor keys. Listen for scales commonly found in folk music. Traditional klezmer instruments were by necessity portable. Music, required for several parts of the wedding ceremony, took place in different rooms or courtyards, and the band would be required to relocate quickly from space to space. In addition, klezmerim were more often than not roving musicians, who would move from town to town as their services were required. Therefore, instruments which could be held in the hands (clarinet, violin, trumpet) or supported by a neck or shoulder strap (accordion, cimbalom, drum) were favored over those which rested on the ground (cello, bass viol) or needed several people to move (piano). It is not entirely out of place to hear klezmer by a wind quintet.

Kites Over Havana

Paquito d’Rivera (b. 1948)

Composed: 1979

In addition to his extraordinary performing career, Paquito d’Rivera has rapidly gained a reputation as an accomplished composer.

This piece is designed to be danced to. Khosidl, named after the Hasidic Jews who danced it, is a more decorous, embellished dance in 2/4 or 4/4, in which the dance steps can be performed in a circle or in a line. A common ending for klezmer songs is an upwards chromatic run or glissando, followed by a slow staccato 8-5-1. They may also end with a new melodic line that is accompanied by a change in the percussion rhythm and an increase in tempo. Klezmer offers cultural diversity that is played all over the world. L’Chaim!

Arrangers note: Klezmer music has frequently been associated with jazz and has even been dubbed as “Jewish Jazz.” But instead of the chords and harmonies used in jazz, Klezmer is more about ornamenting a prescribed melody in a tasteful, artistic manner. In that sense Klezmer is more like Baroque music than jazz, however with vastly different styles of ornamentation! Clarinet is the Klezmer instrument of choice because of the many ‘tricks’ it’s capable of. These arrangements stay true to the tradition of using whichever instruments are available, here the wind quintet, to perform what is essentially music for dancing in a round. Khosidl is a slower dance in duple meter, in which the melody moves slowly enough to invite ornamentation.

In 2002 he wrote *Fiddle Dreams* for violin and piano, commissioned by the McKim Fund in the Library of Congress.

Recognition came in 2007 with the award of a Guggenheim Fellowship, along with the appointment as composer-in-residence at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts with the Orchestra of St. Luke's. His works reflect his eclectic musical interests, ranging from Afro-Cuban rhythms and melodies, including influences encountered in his many travels, and back to his classical origins.

Commissioned by Imani Winds, *Kites Over Havana*, was inspired by a poem (author unknown) spoken throughout the piece—a metaphor for the paradox of freedom: the kite is free to fly up in the sky, but it is bound to earth by the string:

I would like to be a kite, and soar up over the trees.

I would like to try to reach the sky with butterflies and bees.

I would like to be a kite, and with my tail of red and white

I'd love to fly so high, the things below would disappear from sight.

When once you have tested flight, you will forever walk the Earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return.

Kites Over Havana was originally a work written for wind quintet, piano, and clarinet (played by d'Rivera at the premiere). The work played in this performance is an arrangement of the original septet.