

Bainbridge Performing Arts 2013-2014 Season

BAINBRIDGE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CHAMBER SERIES

The American Masters featuring Copland's *Appalachian Spring*



November 3, 2013

BSO Chamber Music Series: The American Masters by Wesley Schulz

Chamber music is taking on a new twist this year at Bainbridge Performing Arts. Historically the musicians of the Bainbridge Symphony Orchestra, as well as colleagues from all across the Puget Sound, have gathered on Bainbridge Island every year to present concerts of great chamber works. This year we continue that tradition but we also are starting something new. Beginning with a program called "American Masters" November 3rd at the BPA, a chamber orchestra will also take part in the series. To kickoff this new aspect of chamber music I thought there would be no better way to start than with Copland's original version of *Appalachian Spring* for 13 instruments.

Aaron Copland is in many ways the father of American classical music. The many sounds of America including jazz, hymns, folk and so forth influenced

Copland, and he incorporated many of these elements into his music. *Appalachian Spring* was composed between 1943 and 1944 for Martha Graham and her ballet troupe. The most recognized aspect of Copland's score is the Shaker hymn, *Simple Gifts*. Copland uses this tune as the theme for a set of variations about two-thirds of the way through the ballet. In this program, thirteen musicians will perform a twenty-five minute suite of music from the ballet using Copland's original orchestration.

Samuel Barber is another of America's great 20th century composers. Contemporaries, Copland and Barber have often appeared on the same program. As a matter of fact, Copland's *Appalachian Spring* was premiered on the same night as Barber's own ballet for Martha Graham, *Medea* also scored for 13 instruments. For this program students from the Seattle Conservatory of Music will perform Barber's String Quartet, op. 11. This three-movement quartet was composed in 1936 while Barber was traveling on a Pulitzer scholarship. Its second movement, *molto adagio*, was transcribed for string orchestra at the request of Arturo Toscanini for his NBC Symphony Orchestra. The resultant "Adagio for Strings" is now one of the most recognized and beloved works by an American composer.

Two other ensembles will also be featured on the program. Members of the Bainbridge Symphony brass section will complement the heritage and inspiration of composers such as Copland, Ives, and Elliot Carter by performing a variety of hymns and American folk songs. Also, a work for mixed quartet by John Williams, who is known mostly for his film music such as *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones*, will be featured. Williams composed *Air and Simple Gift* for the inauguration ceremony of President Barack Obama in 2009. Written for piano, cello, clarinet and violin, this work was inspired by Copland's *Appalachian Spring*. Williams too uses the Shaker melody in passages that are both reflective and exuberant in order to convey the energy and excitement surrounding Obama's historic election.

I hope you will join us for an afternoon of truly moving chamber music. Hearing works such as Copland's original version of *Appalachian Spring* are rare and I promise you will be in for a treat. Come, enjoy, and relax in the sounds of great music.