

Orchestra Series

Symphonic Dances

Friday 12 May, 7:30 PM
Conservatorium Theatre

Programme

Boysen - December Dance (Australian premiere)
Ellerby - Venetian Spells (Australian premiere)
Mussorgsky - Pictures at an Exhibition
Bernstein - Symphonic Dances from "Westside Story"

INTERVAL

Press - Wedding Dance
Hultgren - Dance Diversions - Concertino for Trombone and Wind Orchestra
(World premiere)
Soloist - Jamie Kennedy (trombone)
Hultgren - Jessie's Well
Sparke - Dance Movements (Australian premiere)



Queensland Conservatorium Wind Orchestra

The Conservatorium Wind Orchestra is Australia's leading wind orchestra and sets the benchmark for Wind Orchestra performance across the nation. An ensemble of the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University the Conservatorium Wind Orchestra blends tradition with innovation and classical repertoire with new works from across the globe. The Conservatorium Wind Orchestra is a leader in wind orchestra performance and a significant voice providing the nexus between classical and contemporary musical discourse.

Ralph Hultgren – Conductor

Ralph Hultgren was born in Box Hill, Victoria, Australia, and now resides in Newmarket, Queensland, with his wife Julie and two of his five children. Mr Hultgren began his professional music career as a trumpet player in 1970. He has performed with the Central Band of the Royal Australian Air Force, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and the Australian Brass Choir and as a freelance musician for the theatre, opera, cabaret and recording studio. Mr Hultgren is currently Head of Pre Tertiary Studies at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University where, as well as engaging in the academic pursuits noted below, he provides academic and artistic leadership to the Young Conservatorium.

Mr Hultgren's conducting credits include the direction of musicals, operettas, studio recordings for radio, television and disc, and the concert stage. He has premiered a number of his own works in Australian centres and internationally, and has conducted numerous groups in Australia and overseas. In his present position he conducts the Queensland Conservatorium Wind Orchestra, Queensland Conservatorium's premiere wind group as well as lecturing in conducting and instrumental music education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He is in constant demand as a guest conductor and clinician throughout the Asian Pacific region.

Since commencing his composition life, he has directed his writing more and more towards the wind orchestra genre, and also towards education and amateur performing groups in all media. As composer/arranger in residence for the Queensland Department of Education's Instrumental Music Program, he produced 185 works. His compositions have been performed widely within Australia and overseas and have also been broadcast on radio and television both within Australia and overseas. Mr Hultgren has been nominated for the prestigious Sammy and Penguin Awards for his television soundtracks, and has twice won the coveted Yamaha Composer of the Year Award for works for symphonic band.

Appointments as a consultant in conducting, composition and music education have been entered into in Singapore, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Taiwan, and the USA and throughout Australia. Outside of his musical endeavours, Mr Hultgren is an avid reader and the leader of his church Men's Fellowship.

Jamie Kennedy – Trombone

Jamie Kennedy started his studies at the Queensland Conservatorium in 2003, and is currently in his fourth year of a Bachelor of Music, where he is studying trombone with Tom Coyle, and directing his studies in the performance of Baroque brass music. He plays in many of the ensembles at the Conservatorium, and he is a member of the Queensland Youth Symphony. Jamie is a musician in the Army Reserve Band, playing trombone and bass guitar in the Queensland University Regiment Band.

After he has completed his studies at the Conservatorium, he intends to pursue a career in the regular army band. He considers the art of music to be a marvellous manner of healing, and intends to play with the army bands, taking music to the places where it is most needed. For now, he is very happy to continue reading, working, playing and studying in Brisbane.

December Dance

December Dance received its world premiere at the University of St Thomas, St Paul Minnesota on the 7th of December 2005. It was written in celebration of the fifteenth year of service of Dr Matthew George, conductor of the St Thomas Wind Ensemble and enthusiastic supporter of the commissioning of new music through the music department of St Thomas during his tenure.

The work is a joyful romp that displays the vibrant colours of the wind orchestra set amidst the energy and vitality of the composers score. It tells more than just a story of fifteen years celebration. The composer announced at the premiere he had just become engaged and the work depicts his joy and excitement at the new life ahead of him. This performance is the Australian premiere of the work.

Andrew Boysen

Venetian Spells

Venetian Spells was commissioned by Timothy Reynish and is dedicated to him on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday. Rather like my previous Paris Sketches the work pays tribute to a great city and in particular to various composers associated with it. This is essentially a fun piece and makes use of ensembles drawn from the larger body of the symphonic wind orchestra. It falls into four movements.

1. *Concertante* (Antonio's Allegro). A large brass ensemble is foiled by a more intimate concertante group (featuring the unique timbre of a harpsichord) which plays various interludes in a style akin to that of Vivaldi. The percussion section consists almost entirely of assorted drums with cymbals. Ideas are developed by the two main groups culminating in a grand and noble conclusion, though not without a gentle sting in its tail.
2. *Pas-de-Deux* (Igor's Lament). Buried on the island cemetery of San Michele are both the composer Stravinsky and the impresario Diaghilev. Scored for all of the orchestra, this is a full-bodied and passionate waltz, interrupted by some delicate interludes, all alluding to one of their great collaborations, hinted at but not quoted.
3. *Vespers* (Claudio's Sunset). Scored for winds alone and featuring the subtle shades of cor anglais, alto clarinet and double bassoon, with a single percussion playing tubular bells, the work's slow movement evokes a church organ playing in the early evening. Although the style is not that of Monteverdi, the spirit is.
4. *Festivo* (Giovanni's Canon) The finale is a celebration of the great city in festival time. Things canonical (though without the use of real cannon) make up the material of the movement. Scored for full forces, with some transparent moments, it builds to an epic conclusion of which Gabrieli would have been thoroughly ashamed.

Martin Ellerby

Pictures At An Exhibition

A posthumous exhibition of drawings and water-colors by the architect Victor Hartmann, intimate friend of Moussorgsky, was held in memory of the artist under the auspices of Vladimir Stassov, art and music critic, at the Academy of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, in 1874. Moussorgsky, as a tribute to his friend, essayed piano "paraphrases" of the best of the sketches. The original piano version, published in 1886, is less frequently heard because it tends to have a monochromatic effect, due to its massive chords. Exploiting more fully the coloristic possibilities of the work, Maurice Ravel, at the request of Serge Koussevitzky, set himself the task in 1922 to transcribe Moussorgsky's writing into a work for orchestra.

Modest Mussorgsky

V. Ballet of the Unhatched Chickens - This is a delicately humorous representation of chicks emerging from their shells. The light tapping on the shells, and the soft chirping and stirring are reproduced with great fidelity; also, the surprise and consternation of the chicks when they first look about them. The Scherzino is repeated, after which there is a four-measure Coda.

Symphonic Dances Music from "West Side Story"

Leonard Bernstein's music to "West Side Story" brought a new dimension to Shakespeare's classic love story of Romeo and Juliet and the underlying dynamics of social and racial strife. Arranger Ian Polster has captured Bernstein's wonderful dance rhythms that are integral to the production. The Scherzo is the first of four movements; it displays a characteristic lively and animated rhythm in triple time interspersed with soft, almost tentative, rhythms of changing meter. The transition into the Mambo is abrupt and dominated by the percussion and brass. The third movement, Cha-cha, is soft and graceful, in contrast to what has preceded it. The Fugue is built upon a swing-style "bop" rhythm that underscores the conflict between the Sharks and the Jets. The fast figures are answered by long, tense chords.

Leonard Bernstein

Wedding Dance

Jacques Press

Paul Jacques Press was born in Tiflis, Russia. The music he heard as a child would appear and reappear in his compositions throughout his very long and diverse musical career. He studied composition with Nadia Boulanger in Paris in the early 1920s and then moved to New York to make his mark as one of this country's leading "behind the scenes" composers. His talent for writing in a variety of styles led him to become a composer/arranger for Radio City Music Hall, and later to Hollywood. *Wedding Dance* is the final movement of his 1957 symphonic suite, *Hasseneh*. It is a frenzied tune that evokes the sights and sounds of a traditional Jewish wedding.

Dance Diversions - Concertino for Trombone and Wind Orchestra

Ralph Hultgren

Dance Diversions began as a commission from Michael Morgan, Ensembles Convenor at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, to write a work for one of the talented honours' students in the Bachelor of Music program, Jamie Kennedy.

I met with Jamie to discuss the project and asked him much about what sort of music he enjoyed and what he liked to play. He was somewhat reticent in his communication with me. A degree of shyness and apprehension gripped him, yet I pressed ahead and sent him copies of the sketches, the manuscript score and finally the solo part itself, engraved for ease of reading. There was little response other than to say how excited he was at the project and that he would play anything I wrote. I remember such uncertainty in my youth too! He has certainly given everything to keep his promise to play anything I wrote.

With the concert to premiere the work structured to feature music based around dance ideas and inspirations, I chose to title each section of the piece after dance or dance-related matters. The work as whole sits more comfortably titled as it is rather than "concertino" alone.

The first movement (**Parody**) is a caricature of waltzes and all things to do with them. There is Strauss and the ballet and, of course, the beer garden. It is at one moment tongue in cheek and the next taking itself very seriously indeed!

The second (**Pas de Deux**) is a short, slow portion that provides the opportunity for the soloist to 'dance' in duet with various members of the ensemble. The scoring is light and the intent is for simple lines to intertwine and float.

The final section (**Primitive**) is meant to be an intense flurry of sounds based around hemiola structures and flashes of vivid colours and fervent rhythms. The soloist has the chance to engage in raucous dialogue with the percussion section and to throw ideas at the whole ensemble in a vigorous dialogue that tends to take on the temperament of argument at times. Just as it seems the argument degenerates into fighting, the trombone and the ensemble dance together – but only for a moment.

Jessie's Well

Ralph Hultgren

Jessie's Well is a simple story that comes from the pure heart of a young child, immersed in her love for her daddy and overjoyed at the peace he has found. The melody is Jessie's story, incomplete at times, like the simple wandering of a child. It is Jessie wandering, singing and not finishing the song, as a child often does. The melody drifts in and out but comes back to be completed, like it had never been the intention to leave it incomplete.

Dance Movements

Phillip Sparke

Dance Movements was commissioned by the United States Air Force Band and first performed by them at the Florida Music Educators Association Convention in January 1996.

It is cast in four movements which play without a break; the second and third feature woodwinds and brass respectively.

In many respects, the circumstances of the commission itself were the musical inspiration for the piece: I had been asked to write for a very large band which included piano and harp. It was the first time I had used these instruments in a concert band score and (as in Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements*) their presence coloured the score and, indeed, they type of music I wrote.

The four movements are all dance-inspired, although no specific dance rhythms are used. The first has a Latin American feel and uses xylophone, cabasa, tambourine, and wood block to give local colour. The second Woodwind movement uses a tune that had been plagued me for some time and is, I suppose, in the style of an English country dance. The Brass movement was composed without specific dance analogy, but I think it can be seen as a love duet in classical ballet. The fourth and longest movement has, I hope cured me of a ten-year fascination, almost obsession, with the music of Leonard Bernstein and I will readily admit that it owes its existence to the fantastic dance music in *West Side Story*.

1. Ritmico - The opening theme on horns and saxophones is played amidst stabbing chords from the top and bottom of the band. A gentler theme follows on piccolo and clarinet, followed by flute, oboe, trumpet, harp and glockenspiel. The main motif of the movement then arrives, which includes a dotted rhythm which is to recur at all significant moments. A climax is reached and an angular figure follows on oboes, saxophones and clarinets. Previous material then reappears to bring the movement to a close.

2. Molto vivo (for the Woodwinds) - The second movement starts with a rustic dance tune which is continually interrupted. It passes through various keys and stages of development until a bubbling ostinato arrives on piano, harp, glockenspiel, and cello. Over this, the oboe lays a languid tune which is then taken up by soprano and alto saxophones. A new idea is introduced by clarinets and lower winds; it is built on 9th and 11th chords, highly syncopated and interspersed by snatches of the ostinato. Eventually the oboe theme reappears, accompanied by the lower wind chords. The dance tune then establishes itself once more and reaches a climax before winding down to a close.

3. Lento (for the Brass) - The third movement opens with whispering muted trumpets, harp, and vibraphone. Declamatory statements from horn and trombone answer each other and a slow and majestic chorale gets underway. Trumpets join to reach a climax where the original trombone statement reappears, bringing back the opening trumpets figures.

4. Molto ritmico - The final movement bursts into life with a passage featuring the percussion section. The whole band then joins in until a driving bass ostinato establishes itself. Melodic snatches are thrown around the band until the gradual crescendo leads to a unison passage for the entire band. A robust theme appears on horns and saxophones but eventually the earlier sinister music returns. After a short pause a plaintive tune on the woodwinds leads to a more rhythmic one on the brass but it is not long before the percussion remind us of the opening of the movement and the ostinato reappears. The robust horn tune is this time played by the full band but the moment of triumph is short and a running passage appears which starts in the bottom of the band but works its way to the upper woodwinds. Eventually the brass play a noble fanfare which dispels the darker mood and ends the movement in a blaze of colour.