



CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY'S

**VIRGINIA COMMUNITY
MUSIC FESTIVAL**

FERGUSON CENTER FOR THE ARTS • ADMISSION FREE

APRIL 22-23, 2023

Program Notes

April 22, 2023 — 6PM

cbwe.org

Mademoiselle “A Ballet for Band” (1952, unpublished)

Robert Russell Bennett

There are few composers more closely associated with the golden age of musical theater than Robert Russell Bennett. During his five-decade-long career, he orchestrated over 300 Broadway musicals starting in the early 1920s and working into the 1970s. Legendary titles that felt the benefits of his pen were *Show Boat*, *Girl Crazy*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Sound of Music*, and *Camelot*. He also worked with Richard Rodgers on the sweeping documentary *Victory at Sea* which encompassed more than twelve hours of original music. He also found time to write seven symphonies and an opera.

It is hard to imagine any of his works being unpublished, but *A Ballet for Band* is one of the rare exceptions. It was first performed by the Goldman Band in 1952 at The Mall in New York City’s Central Park. It is scored in three movements entitled “Barcarolle and Hornpipe,” “March Militaire,” and “Can-can.” Like all his popular works, it masterfully crafted with counterpoint and harmony that just works, both for the performers and for the listener. Even today, Robert Russell Bennett is a composer that other aspire to be. “I wish I could write like that” has been uttered by more than one conductor in this author’s experience. The music in manuscript form used for tonight’s performance is provided courtesy of the US Military Academy Band at West Point, New York.

Rhapsody in Blue

George Gershwin, arr. Hunsberger — Dr. Benjamin Corbin, piano

The story behind the creation of *Rhapsody in Blue*, one of George Gershwin’s most iconic works, is a fascinating and surprising one. Though most often heard performed with a symphony orchestra, it was originally scored for piano solo and jazz band. Commissioned by bandleader Paul Whiteman, it was premiered in 1924 at a concert called “An Experiment in Modern Music” in New York City. The later arrangements for pit orchestra and full orchestra were done by Ferde Grofe who you might recall as the composer of *Grand Canyon Suite*. The arrangement we perform here for wind ensemble was done by Eastman Wind Ensemble Director Emeritus, Donald Hunsberger.

In 1923, bandleader Paul Whiteman asked George Gershwin to write a concerto for an all-jazz concert he was planning in honor of Lincoln’s birthday. Gershwin initially declined believing he would not have enough time to compose and revise the score. A few weeks later, George’s brother Ira found a news article stating that the work was already in the creation stage and would be performed at the concert scheduled for February of 1924. This was a surprise to all and a tense one because the article appeared in January of

1924. A phone call to Whiteman the next day revealed that his rival, Vincent Lopez was also planning an experimental concert which created the real possibility that both men would be upstaged and embarrassed. Gershwin agreed to write the concerto with only five weeks until the premiere. The rest, as they say is history. Today, the opening clarinet solo is as recognizable as the first bars of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and the work is frequently performed having stood the test of time. The first performance, with Gershwin as the soloist, was attended by such luminaries as Victor Herbert, Walter Damrosch, Igor Stravinsky, Fritz Kreisler, Leopold Stokowski and John Philip Sousa. (*WOW! Ed.*)

Our soloist, Dr. Benjamin Corbin, received the Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees in Piano Performance from the University of Oregon where he studied with Dean Kramer and David Riley. He also received a second Master of Music and the Doctorate in Musical Arts in Collaborative Piano from The University of Texas at Austin, studying with Anne Epperson. While at the University of Oregon, he was awarded Outstanding Undergraduate Performer, Keyboardist, and Collaborative Pianist in 2009, as well as the Outstanding Collaborative Pianist award in 2012. He also was the recipient of the Mary Elizabeth Sherrill Presidential Endowed Award in Music from 2014-2016. As a lecturer, he has presented at the Peninsula Music Teachers Association, the Appomattox Governor's School, and the University of Texas at Austin. He has also served as a member of the collaborative piano staff at the Meadowmount School of Music in upstate New York and in August of 2019, was a guest artist in collaborative piano at the Second International Clarinet Festival of Panamá. Dr. Corbin is currently Assistant Professor of Piano and Collaborative Arts at Christopher Newport University, where he also serves as the Director of Keyboard Studies.

Festival

(James) Clifton Williams – Mel Lauf, Jr., conducting

Clifton Williams was a major contributor to the wind ensemble genre during his career which covered 30 years of the mid-twentieth century. He began his musical career as a pianist and horn player while also pursuing conducting, music theory and composition. He served in the Army Air Forces Band as a drum major and taught theory and composition at the University of Texas and the University of Miami.

Tonight, we perform one of his well-known works, *Festival*. It covers a broad range of musical expression in its seven-minute performance time. It features the ensemble, rather than relying on exposed solo passages, which makes it ideal for outdoor concerts and for contest environments. Today, it is considered standard repertoire for amateur and professional wind ensembles alike.

INTERMISSION

One Life Beautiful

Julie Giroux – Laura Parker, conducting

One Life Beautiful was written by Julie Giroux in memory of Heather Cramer Reu for her “one life beautiful” that brought love and joy to those around her. It was commissioned by her family in 2010.

Julie Giroux is a multi-talented composer who is enjoying a successful career as a composer, arranger and conductor for television and films. Her notable contributions have been the score for the Emmy-winning mini-series *North and South* as well as the dramas *Dynasty* and *The Colbys*. She also wrote for the feature films *Karate Kid II*, *White Men Can't Jump* and *Broadcast News*. She has been nominated for Emmys in 1988 and 1992, when she won in the music direction category for the *64th Annual Academy Awards*. She has over 100 television and film credits and has arranged for such pop stars as Michael Jackson, Madonna, Celine Dion, Billy Crystal, Paula Abdul and Liza Minnelli.

New York Cityscape

Jeff Tyzik (b. 1951) – featuring The Second Ending Brass Quintet

New York Cityscape is a five-movement suite that features the sounds and musical styles most closely associated with The Big Apple with each movement illustrating a different location. “Ragtime Redux” refers to 28th and 5th which is a popular night spot for New Yorkers. “Tango 1932” is 103rd and Riverside, a high-end residential neighborhood that delivers stunning views of the Hudson River to those who live high enough. “Traffic Jammin’” takes us to Times Square and its wonderful chaos, bright lights and exciting vibe, and its intense traffic. “African Dance” heads south to Wall Street and the East River where we go back in time to 1709 when that location was a hub of the slave trade. The final movement is “Tarantella”, a dance that was traditionally done to exhaustion. The location is Mulberry Street which today is a major thoroughfare for New York’s famous Little Italy. The work was also intended to include dancers and you’ll experience that feel in each movement. So, it is visual music on multiple levels.

Commando March

Samuel Barber

Samuel Barber was a child prodigy and award-winning American composer who attended the Curtis Institute starting at age 14. He wrote his first opera at age 10. He was a fellow at the American Academy in Rome and won two Pulitzer Prizes, the American Prix de Rome, three Guggenheim Fellowships, an honorary degree from Harvard University and election to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

In 1943, Barber enlisted in the Army Air Corps. During his time in the military, he was inspired to compose his Second Symphony, "Flight", as well as his only work for wind ensemble *Commando March*. It was first premiered by the Army Air Forces Tactical Training Command Band in May of 1943 in Atlantic City, New Jersey. It was performed many more times during the next few years which cemented its place among the standards of wind band literature. It is a completely original work that has been so well loved by audiences and conductors alike that it was even scored for orchestra at the request of Serge Koussevitzky who performed it with the Boston Symphony in October of 1943.

🎶 COMING SOON 🎶

GIVE LOCAL 757!™

Save the date for our annual giving event
April 25-26, 2023

Your generous financial support helps present future concerts of the CBWE music you know and love!

Visit givelocal757.org and cbwe.org for more information and to donate.

FORT MONROE SM

— *Where Freedom Lives* —

Join us for our next Music by the Bay
**Summer Concert June 8, 2023, at
Continental Park, Fort Monroe**

Free and open to the public.

Find more details at fortmonroe.org
and cbwe.org.

Proud member of the ASSOCIATION OF CONCERT BANDS:
The International Voice of Community Bands
www.acbands.org

