



FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

in Cooperation with Pacific's Conservatory of Music presents

AKROPOLIS REED QUINTET

TIM GOCKLIN, oboe
KARI DION, clarinet
MATT LANDRY, saxophone
ANDREW KOEPPE, bass clarinet
RYAN REYNOLDS, bassoon

2:30 PM, Sunday, September 27, 2015
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
University of the Pacific

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

- GEORGE GERSHWIN** (1898–1937) **THREE PRELUDES** (1926) (*arr. Ryan Reynolds for Reed Quintet*)
I. Allegro bin ritmato e deciso
II. Andante con moto e poco rubato
III. Allegro ben ritmato e deciso
- CLAUDE DEBUSSY** (1862–1918) **CHILDREN'S CORNER SUITE** (1908) (*arr. Raaf Hekkema for Reed Quintet*)
I. Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum
II. Jimbo's Lullaby
III. Serenade for the Doll
IV. The Snow is Dancing
V. The Little Shepherd
VI. Golliwogg's Cakewalk
- ASAF PERES** (B. 1981) **FUN FUN FUN FUN** (2011)
I. Backseat Fun
II. Uncomfortable Fun
III. Techno Fun

— INTERMISSION —

- JOHN STEINMETZ** (b. 1951) **SORROW AND CELEBRATION FOR REED QUINTET & AUDIENCE** (2015)
- TON TER DOEST** (b. 1964) **CIRCUSMUZIEK** (1991)
I.
II.
III.
IV.
V.
VI.
VII.

The AKROPOLIS REED QUINTET is represented by Ariel Artists
For booking, contact Nina Moe, nina@arielartists.com
Akropolis Quintet, LLC, 416 Yerkes St., Northville, MI 48167

Season Sponsor: C. A. Webster Foundation

ARTIST PROFILE



The Akropolis Reed Quintet takes listeners on extraordinary musical adventures, performing an innovative repertoire with acclaimed precision. Founded in 2009 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and the first ever reed quintet to win the Fischhoff Gold Medal in 2014, Akropolis took the Grand Prize at the MTNA and Plowman chamber music competitions consecutively in 2011, and has garnered prizes at three additional national competitions. Championing the next generation of maverick musicians, Akropolis is also winner of the 2015 Fischhoff Educator Award, delivering impactful outreach at schools ranging from kindergarten to conservatory. Akropolis has released two studio albums to critical acclaim and commissioned more than 25 reed quintet works to date. Their dynamic concerts feature accessible contemporary works framed by invigorating arrangements of classical music spanning four centuries.

Akropolis has been a resident ensemble at major festivals around the country and abroad, including Summerwinds in Münster, Germany as well as the Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings and Juneau Jazz and Classics. Akropolis opened its 2015-16 season at Chamber Music Northwest, premiering the first work for reed quintet and string quartet by David Schiff with the eminent Dover Quartet, and collaborating with the BodyVox Dance Company to perform selections with choreography. Akropolis has also appeared at numerous colleges and universities to perform and conduct master classes on commission collaboration, the business of chamber music, and chamber music performance.

Akropolis delivers passionate, energized, and unforgettable performances on a variety of series both traditional and adventurous in nature. All Akropolis events include informative musical introductions, insatiable performance chemistry, and a chance to greet the artists. Akropolis remains wholly committed to reaching out and fortifying the next generation of music mavericks.

We closed our 2014-15 Season with the observation that the realm of chamber music is entirely dominated by string music and, in contrast to that, presented a rewarding wind program. We open our 2015-16 Season with a wind program but with different instrumentation and hope you find it equally rewarding.

Our 60th continuous season also includes the **Turtle Island Quartet** with a program inspired by Miles Davis' *Birth of the Cool*. This is followed by the **Tesla Quartet** doing *Perspectives on Four Strings*. We start 2016 with the **Boston Trio** playing a program of Mozart, Musto and Debussy, and conclude the season with **Ensemble Schumann** presenting music for piano, viola and oboe.

Today, the **Akropolis Reed Quintet** presents *Under the Influence*, a program of traditional and contemporary classical music separated by a century and connected by a curiosity about the world around us. Each work draws from influences surrounding the composer, from turn-of-the-century jazz and impressionism to present-day pop and culture.

If you find our programming enticing and our efforts rewarding, please consider financially supporting our work so that we may continue to bring you world class chamber music.

Gershwin: Three Preludes

Gershwin taught himself to play piano at age 11 by watching the keys on a player piano. Four years later he dropped out of school to earn a living making the rolls for those same pianos. At age 17, Gershwin published his first song and first solo piano composition. By the time he finished the *Three Preludes*, he had premiered the riotously popular *Rhapsody in Blue* two years earlier and was an international marvel.

The first prelude is a short, jazzy exclamation that opens with a bright, straight-forward blues phrase. Listen for the answer, which is an artful drawl, as if giving a wink. The rejoinder is a low, loud ostinato. Then the festivity grows with pizzicato developing the five-note introduction and a Latin sense arising from use of Brazilian baião rhythms.

The second prelude was described by Gershwin as "a sort of blues lullaby." An absorbed, unaccompanied introductory theme is followed by a gliding bluesy melody that continues the melancholy mood in a higher register. A brief middle section brightens the mood, then recedes to the pensive ostinato and finishes soft and unpretentious.

A short introduction jump-starts the third prelude, which quickly reveals the two melodies that form the main theme, a question/answer

melodic pair. Listen for this device to provide harmonic structure throughout, with questions in E-flat minor and answers in E-flat major. A middle section has the instruments weaving and hopping back and forth and around each other providing a syncopated, dense, and healthy texture. The end of the movement is a flamboyant restatement of the theme in octaves provoking a scuffle between major and minor. Can you determine which triumphs as the piece concludes with a flourish?

These short pieces show Gershwin's brilliance at melding jazz and classical music that was to influence Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland and Gunther Schuller later in the 20th Century. When composed, Gershwin's scales and chords were considered peculiar. Today, they sound quintessentially American.

Debussy: Children's Corner

The toys and events in the life of Debussy's three-year-old daughter, Claude-Emma (nicknamed "Chou-Chou" and whom he adored) were the inspiration for the *Children's Corner*, an intimate, private and delightful, six-movement suite. Written for and dedicated to Chou-Chou, the pieces are not intended to be played by children; rather they are meant to evoke the incidents and playthings of childhood. Originally written for solo piano, it was published and premiered in 1908, then orchestrated by André Caplet in 1910. The composition as well as each of the six pieces has an English language title.

The title of the first piece, *Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum*, is a satirical, humorous reference to *Gradus ad Parnassum* (Steps to Perfection), a 1807 collection of 100 piano finger exercises composed by Muzio Clementi, the ironical word "Doctor" indicating Clementi as the "healer" of technical problems. In a letter to his publisher, Debussy gave explicit instructions for what this piece is supposed to sound like and how it is to be performed. He wrote: "It should be played every morning before breakfast, beginning moderato and ending in spiritoso...[It] should not be thought of as a virtuoso piece...so it should not be played with great speed. Because of the humor involved, it should sound like an exercise...articulated with extreme clarity." Consequently, you may hear it foreshadow Chou-Chou's future piano lessons. It begins with instructions to keep a metrical pulse going with the seemingly endless series of 16th notes. But the student slows to an abrupt break with a whole note as she gazes out the window where play awaits. But sulking, she realizes that she must finish before she can play and takes off again with another long series of notes that slow by use

of 8th notes but again return to the first tempo. There is an acute sense of Chou-Chou becoming bored and wanting to quit the exercise. An almost exact repeat of the original beginning occurs, but with an acceleration as she realizes that the end is near and speeds to the conclusion and crescendos to the closing chords with a fortissimo crash before she runs off to play...until tomorrow's exercise repeats.

Jimbo's Lullaby describes the elephant Jumbo from the French Sudan that was part of P T Barnum's circus and that lived briefly in the Jardin des Plantes at the time of Debussy's birth. It evokes Chou-Chou's velveteen toy elephant that must be told a story to go to sleep. The opening melody, which will reappear several times throughout the piece, begins in lowest register with a slow tempo evoking the "gentle but a little clumsy" elephant. The second melody, quoting the French folk lullaby "*Do, do l'enfant, do*", begins pianissimo and fades to *ppp* and a held rest. The next section begins with alternating intervals of seconds implying the elephant is taking a little walk before bed. This evolves into faster dissonant staccato octave leaps in low bass that lend a sense of something sinister. The anxiety is relieved by return of the first tempo and melody played simultaneously with the second melody becoming sweet and dreamy. The tempo and mood continue to slow until the second melody starts for the last time but does not finish as both music and elephant drift off to sleep.

Serenade for/of/to the Doll (there is some controversy regarding the correct preposition) is in triple meter, marked to be played moderately fast but not too fast, noted by Debussy to be played with the soft pedal throughout, and also marked *pp* with the instructions "delicate and peaceful." The first of the six pieces to be written, it portrays an Oriental porcelain doll in his daughter's crib. Typically, a serenade is in honor of or expressive of love for an individual, but this is more a duet in which there is dialog between boy and girl dolls. The boy begins with a pentatonic melody suggestive of a mandolin. The girl responds with the same melody but more guitarlike. This exchange continues throughout the piece with the girl's responses in the higher register. As in most relationships, there are moments of anxiety and strife with the boy having to explain himself, but peace and harmony prevail as an E-major chord signifies they will live happily ever after.

The Snow is Dancing has a delicate, toccata-like feeling and is Debussy's attempt to portray the melancholy atmosphere of snow, objects seen through it, and the intensification of the storm. It is the musical equivalent of the pointillist paintings of Seurat and other impressionistic painters in Paris at the time. The piece begins sweet and subdued with rising 8th notes, but the storm intensifies quickly with a switch to staccato 16th notes and use of the upper treble range. Listen for the melody to move among the instruments of high and low register as this was part of the piano exercise requiring precise semi-detached playing in both hands. Then quick, fluttering notes played lightly and with increasingly complicated rhythm characterize the remainder of the piece. Can you imagine Chou-Chou watching the falling snowflakes as she awaits the return of the sun and her opportunity for outdoor play?

The shortest piece of the set, *The Little Shepherd* portrays a shepherd with pan pipes. This simple, improvised, unaccompanied pipe gradually acquires complex harmonies with dotted 16th notes and triplets, only to return to simplicity. There are three solos and three commentaries following them. (Interestingly, the first solo has breath marks in the autograph score; was a wind arrangement anticipated?) Debussy uses different modes and dissonances that resolve into tonality but retain the melancholy mood of something unspecified from Chou-Chou's childhood. The sound of the pipe is effectively imitated by use of an unaccompanied modal melody in the upper range of the treble clef, marking it with *piano* dynamics, and giving instructions to play it "very sweetly and delicately expressive." Listen for the first section to end in a perfect cadence, the final chord of which lasts four slow beats achieving complete stillness emphasized by two beats of silence. You will hear this twice more: once in the second section where the shepherd improvises a slightly different melody with a brief dance-like section that closes with a short three-note motive played by the shepherd and echoed back, then repeated and echoed back more softly. The final repeat of the cadence occurs in the final measures of the piece, which repeats the opening but with softer dynamics and a slower pace preceding the final cadence. Then the piece just evaporates into nothingness.

The final selection, *Golliwogg's Cakewalk*, is easily the most amusing, humorous, and recognizable of the six. There is a large dynamic

range that is very effective and it is a harbinger of the jazz mania that was to overtake Europe in the early 20th Century. Golliwoggs were stuffed, black dolls with wild red hair, red pants, and red bow ties popularized by the works of illustrator Florence Kate Upton. A cakewalk was a dance or strut contest originated by African-American slaves who poked fun at the conceited manners and pompous dance styles of their owners. There was always a cake as the prize, and the dancer with the most elaborate, exaggerated, and pretentious steps always "took the cake." This is a ragtime piece with syncopations and a banjo-like character. As the title suggests, it depicts this ridiculous doll trying to dance with a variety of clumsy movements. It begins with a jazzy fanfare as Golliwogg struts out for his cakewalk. Listen for syncopation to depict his steps and a continuously repeated rhythmic pattern, a series of thirds, and a crescendo to visualize the doll's performance of the high kicks in his dance. There follows a slowing of tempo as the lower register repeats the beat as a staccato 8th note and the higher register plays on the offbeat implying that Golliwogg is trying to mischievously sneak around. About three quarters of the way through the piece, Debussy surprises us with a parody of Wagner's *Prelude to Tristan und Isolde* with the instructions "slower, with great emotion" and "not to be afraid to overdo it" as Golliwogg sneers or laughs at Wagner's romanticism.¹ The parody repeats until snippets of the original theme and dance occur and recur until finally the theme returns and repeats in its entirety and at the original tempo. A *fortissimo* crash suggests that Golliwogg has fallen; then after a short rest, he rises and takes his bow, which brings his dance and the suite to a close.

In this sophisticated piece, Debussy expanded the repertory of modal melodies beyond standard major and minor. While the titles may be childish, the composition is not child's play.

Peres: Fun Fun Fun Fun

Asaf Peres' *Fun Fun Fun Fun* is an amusing, witty critique of today's popular music. The title itself is a bit of a double joke: the intentional quoting of the notorious Rebecca Black song "Friday", and the fact that there are only three movements (all named after a different kind of "fun") rather than the indicated four.² *Fun Fun Fun Fun* comes to an exhilarating head with the hilariously robotic "Techno Fun", and while the entire piece might seem in jest, Mr. Peres has a sincere interest in the evolution of popular music,

holding a PhD from the University in Michigan in composition. His dissertation contained the piece, *Two Very Late Night Dances*, in which one of the two movements is titled, "If the Beat's Alright She Will Dance All Night", a quote from comedian Chris Rock. Peres' continued studies of popular music seek to unite its unstoppable momentum with classical music.

Steinmetz: Sorrow & Celebration

Sorrow and Celebration for Reed Quintet and Audience might exemplify the plight of the composer, as he seeks to explain the world around him. About this newly commissioned work, composer John Steinmetz writes:

"This piece imitates a ceremony or ritual, calling people together to mourn and rejoice. As I began composing, the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner were on my mind. The sorrow in this music started there, but it is meant to honor any grief, whether individual or shared.

"After mourning, the music changes mood, eventually becoming dance-like. Sometimes sorrow, in bringing people together, can cut through the illusion of separateness, and that is cause for gratitude and celebration. And a Wendell Berry poem advises, 'Be joyful though you have considered all the facts.

"When the music was nearly finished, I read about Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell's transformative experience while returning from the moon. He described looking out at the earth and the vastness of space. 'I became aware that everything that exists is part of one intricately interconnected whole.

"I am grateful to Akropolis for commissioning this piece, bringing it to life, helping to improve it, and for encouraging audience participation. To listeners, thank you for taking part!"

ter Doest: Circusmuziek

Akropolis closes the concert with its most popular work, Ton ter Doest's *Circusmuziek*. Evoking a multitude of images and ideas, each movement is intentionally untitled, leaving it to the audience to decipher which circus scenes they evoke. From Akropolis' perspective, the circus is happening on stage, each vignette asking for a unique type of risk, from daring leaps to sudden changes of character. With that in mind, you will have to imagine the program notes as well!

— notes © Dr. Michael Spencer

¹ This anti-Wagner sentiment was due to the aesthetics and politics following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, which France had ignominiously lost.

² Perhaps the fourth *Fun* shall be what we experience upon hearing the first three?

60TH SEASON

2015-2016

*Presented in Cooperation with
University of the Pacific Conservatory of
Music, Daniel Ebbers, Interim Dean*

Akropolis Reed Quintet

2:30 PM Sunday, September 27, 2015

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

RECEPTION FOLLOWS

Turtle Island Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, October 25, 2015

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Tesla Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, November 15, 2015

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Boston Trio

2:30 PM Sunday, February 14, 2016

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

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Ensemble Schumann

2:30 PM Sunday, April 17, 2016

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

RECEPTION FOLLOWS

TO OUR AUDIENCE

- The use of cameras and recording devices of any kind is forbidden.
- There is no smoking in the building.
- Please turn off cellular telephones and disengage audible signals on digital devices during concert.
- Concert programs are subject to change without notice.
- Seating is unreserved for the 2015-16 Season.
- Contributions, including memorials, are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Tickets are available at the door or
online at chambermusicfriends.org

Adult: Single \$25, Season \$100
UOP/Delta Faculty: \$15, Season \$70
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FOCM welcomes children to our concerts.
An adult must accompany children ten
years of age and younger (please, no
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PO Box 4874
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