School of Music presents

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SYMPHONIC WIND ENSEMBLE

“Picture Studies”

Thursday, November 18, 2021
8:00 PM

Robert J. Ambrose, conductor
Ellie Anderson, graduate assistant conductor
Octet for Wind Instruments (1923)  
I. Sinfonia  
II. Tema con Variazioni  
III. Finale

Ellie Anderson, graduate assistant conductor

Here We Rest (2011)  
Anthony Barfield  
(b. 1983)

Picture Studies (2012)  
Adam Schoenberg  
(b. 1980)  
Trans. by Don Patterson

I. Intro  
II. Three Pierrots  
III. Repetition  
IV. Olive Orchard  
V. Kandinsky  
VI. Calder's World  
VII. Miró  
VIII. Interlude  
IX. Cliffs of Moher  
X. Pigeons in Flight
FLUTE/PICCOLO
Joycelyn Jackson
Jordan Lilly
Anna Spiller
Sarah Willis

OBOE/ENGLISH HORN
Carolyn Johnston
Treston Lawson
Brooke Owen

BASSOON
Lazara Beatriz Santana Alvarez
Jasaun Davie

CLARINET
Ellie Anderson
Amber Aycart
Mikayla Bush
Joe Horvieth
Jack Lloyd
Jacob Soesbee

BASS CLARINET
Mikayla Bush
Jacob Soesbee

SOPRANO/ALTO SAXOPHONE
Tina Christiansen
Bryant Le

TENOR SAXOPHONE
Andrew Gaillard

BARITONE SAXOPHONE
Sarah Griffin
William Tate

BASS SAXOPHONE
Tina Christiansen

TRUMPET
Fish Brosmer
Taylor Greene
Trevor Lambert
Pedro Morales Ortega
Victor Pires
Preston Wilhite

HORN
Ethan Atkinson
Jacob Hartis
Eric Hawkins
Amelia Young

TROMBONE
Breanna Jones
Josias Muniz
Tye Shabazz

EUPHONIUM
Ashley Ferguson
Frederick Finch
Josh Graham

TUBA
Ethan Maholland
Tommy Piland

STRING BASS
Noah Gonzalez-Rubio

PERCUSSION
Charlie Burrell
Braxton Hall
Nyla Hardy
Donald Johnson
Billy Mizelle
Khesner Oliveira
Mason Rhodes

TUNED CRYSTAL GOBLETs
Melanie Cheney
Taylor Greene
Samantha Jorgensen
Trevor Lambert
Pedro Morales Ortega
Chris Washington

PIANO
Chia-Hui Tu

HARP
Julie Koenig
Octet for Wind Instruments

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) was a revolutionary composer who dramatically changed and challenged the compositional traditions of his time. Born in Oranienbaum, Russia, to a musically supportive family, Stravinsky began to study piano and theory at the age of nine. He would later study composition as a young adult with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, who greatly influenced Stravinsky's early works through orchestration practices and use of nationalistic folk tunes. Although audiences had experienced his radical approach to rhythm, meter, and harmony through previous works such as The Firebird (1910), Petrushka (1911), and The Rite of Spring (1913), they had yet to experience the novel sounds of his Neoclassical phase; a transition to the use of Baroque and Classical composition methods that would define the following three decades of his creative output.

The Octet for Wind Instruments solidified Stravinsky's place as a leading composer in the Neoclassical style through his fusion of classical forms and techniques including sonata form, fugue, and counterpoint, with modern compositional elements such as rhythmic complexity, metric displacement, bitonality, and instrumentation. Even today, this arrangement of instruments is considered unusual in the history of chamber wind octets. Stravinsky spoke clearly about his selections, stating “the strings are supple, less cold, and more vague” which did not suit his vision for the music; Stravinsky was aiming for a transparent and disparate timbre. He purposefully chose eight instruments (flute, clarinet, two bassoons, two trumpets, and two trombones) for their distinct dynamic contrast and register range.

In the first movement, “Sinfonia”, Stravinsky employs traditional sonata form with a slow introduction. A wide variety of timbral colors are introduced within the first two measures and the themes are bright and strident. Movement two, perhaps the most technically demanding, is a theme and five variations. Stravinsky renews conventional theme and variations structure by using the first variation as an interlude between each subsequent variation; adding a sense of unity to the movement. Each variation has a strong personality of its own as Stravinsky runs the gamut in styles from waltz, to fugue, to gallop. The final movement, “Finale”, ends with an upbeat rondo whose returning theme illustrates a light conversation between the bassoon and clarinet. The Octet ends with a refreshingly light codetta that greatly juxtaposes the punctuated and angular music that precedes it.

Here We Rest

In April of 2011, one of the deadliest tornado outbreaks to ever occur was recorded in the United States. This event, later dubbed The Super Outbreak, resulted in the loss of 348 lives, 238 of whom were from Alabama. Shortly after the event, Barfield composed Here We Rest as a tribute to those from the state of Alabama who lost their lives. Originally scored for trombone choir, the composer transcribed the work for wind band in 2012. This version premiered later that year at the New York Wind Band Festival at Carnegie Hall. This performance served as Barfield’s Carnegie Hall debut.

The piece opens with a haunting quarter note motive in the vibraphone over which a two-chord idea sounds repeatedly. This leads to a soaring melody in the winds which repeats with variation before a second theme is stated, first in solo instruments and then by the tutti ensemble. A development section ensues in which the themes and motives are subjected to various treatments. The work climaxes with a
grant restatement of the opening theme before retreating back to the quarter note motive and two-chord idea with which it began. Throughout the work, Barfield uses dissonance coupled with increasingly urgent statements of the opening two-chord idea to give an unsettled feeling that may be depicting pain and mourning. The piece closes without resolution, perhaps symbolizing a sense of loss and emptiness.

**Picture Studies**

Adam Schoenberg (b. 1980) is an American composer of contemporary classical music, with an emphasis on music for orchestra, chamber ensemble, and film. Recent commissions and collaborations include works for the London Symphony Orchestra, University of Texas Wind Ensemble, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Aspen Music Festival, and San Francisco Symphony. Schoenberg’s music has been awarded the ASCAP’s Morton Gould Young Composer Award, Brain M. Israel Prize from the Society for New Music, and the Palmer-Dixon Prize from The Juilliard School. In 2018, Picture Studies received two Grammy Award-nominations, including Best Contemporary Classical Composition. Schoenberg is currently a professor at Occidental College, where he teaches composition and film scoring.

Picture Studies was commissioned in November of 2011 by the Kansas City Symphony and Nelson-Atkins Museum. The committee asked Schoenberg to reimagine Modest Mussorgsky’s iconic work for solo piano Pictures at an Exhibition (1874). Unlike, Mussorgksy’s piece, which focuses on depicting the work of Viktor Hartmann, Schoenberg’s 21st-century version takes inspiration from eight different artists spanning multiple mediums. In honor of the original work which was for solo piano, four of the ten movements in Pictures Studies were originally written as piano etudes. It was transcribed for wind ensemble by Don Patterson in 2012. Picture Studies includes ten movements: a brief intro, an interlude, and eight movements- one for each piece of artwork. Schoenberg writes, “my main objective was to create an architectural structure that connected each movement to the next, while creating an overall arc for the entire piece.”

I. Intro The suite opens with a brief intro that places the listener inside of the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City, MO.

II. Three Pierrots (based on Albert Bloch’s painting, Die Drei Pierrots Nr. 2) The term “pierrot” references a stock male character in the 17th century Italian tradition of commedia dell’arte theatre. This character is typically foolish and pining for love. The mood of this movement is playful and energetic. A triad representing the three Pierrots is passed around, twisted, and turned on its head until the movement ends abruptly.
III. Repetition (based on Kurt Baasch’s photograph, Repetition) Baasch’s photograph captures the repetitiveness of mundane everyday life in four people’s lives. The form of this movement is ABA. Schoenberg represents the repetition through the use of ostinato, originally presented in the clarinets. This rhythmic motif is heavily developed until the full ensemble is involved with the theme being interrupted by eighth notes and sixteenths in the upper woodwinds and percussion. The climax of the phrase serves as a “camera’s shutter click” and returns the ostinato to its original state.


IV. Olive Orchard (based on Vincent Van Gogh’s painting, Olive Orchard) Van Gogh was especially fascinated by the scenery of the olive orchards and described the landscape as “violet shadows lying on the sunny sand.” Schoenberg celebrates this impressionistic style and appreciation of nature through a tender, colorful, and lush setting. Schoenberg indicates for the ensemble to play “freely.” A stunning melody for oboe simply sings over a gently swaying accompaniment.


V. Kandinsky (based on Wassily Kandinsky’s painting, Rose with Gray) Kandinsky is a direct juxtaposition to the previous music. Schoenberg opens with an angular and aggressive statement in the brass; woodwinds join and add to the frenzy to create a jagged texture. This intensity sustains and is unrelenting.

VI. Calder’s World (based on Alexander Calder’s sculpture, Untitled, 1937) Schoenberg creates a mysterious and flowing atmosphere. Improvisatory sounding gestures pass from player to player, creating a kaleidoscope of colors.


VII. Miró (based on Joan Miró’s painting, Women at Sunrise) Miró is upbeat, fresh, catchy, and spontaneous. A bombastic and flamboyant Eb clarinet solo bounces between quarter note interruptions.


VIII. Interlude This very brief movement is a memory of the introduction. Schoenberg brings back the original haunting piano theme with additional instruments. This movement serves as a palette cleanser before the final chapters are played without pause to the end.

IX. Cliffs of Moher (based on Hiroshi Sugimoto’s photograph, Atlantic Ocean, Cliffs of Moher) Schoenberg represents the Atlantic ocean and Moher cliffs through a flowing motif is written for the upper woodwinds and the flutes gracefully sit on top of the texture.

X. Pigeons in Flight (based on Francis Blake’s photograph, Pigeons in Flight) Schoenberg writes the following in response to this photograph, “I’ve never looked at pigeons this way. There appears to be so much joy, beauty, and depth. This will be the longest and most expansive movement. Fly away.” This joyous and triumphant movement is a beautiful and satisfying close to the 26-minute suite.

Robert J. Ambrose is a versatile musician who pursues a wide range of professional activities. Ambrose currently serves as Director of Bands at Georgia State University, a research institution of over 53,000 students. He is also Founder and Music Director of the Atlanta Chamber Winds and the National Chamber Winds, and Co-Founder of Bent Frequency Contemporary Music Ensemble.

Dr. Ambrose is in constant demand as a guest conductor and has performed on four continents. Recent engagements include performances in Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan as well as across the United States. He has also served as a guest conductor on tour with The United States Army Field Band, the only civilian ever to be asked to do so. A prolific arranger, his transcriptions and editions are widely-performed. Ambrose studied at Boston College, Boston University, and Northwestern University, where he received the Doctor of Music degree in conducting.

A native from Alberta, Canada, Ellie Anderson is a graduate from the University of Alberta where she completed her Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Education degrees in the spring of 2013. She began her teaching career at Onoway Jr/Sr High School the following fall teaching middle and high school band. In May of 2021, she earned the Master of Music in Wind Band Conducting degree from Georgia State University. Anderson is currently pursuing the Artist Certificate in Wind Band Conducting at Georgia State University.

The mission of the Georgia State University School of Music is to preserve, promote, and advance humanity’s rich and expanding tradition of artistic music-making through performance, composition, education, and research in accordance with the urban and global initiatives of the University.

Students performing in this concert are supported by gifts to the School of Music. To donate please visit our giving page and select the fund of your choice. Your generosity makes all the difference. Thank you!