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Paul Haas
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SEASON 59.5

The TBSO Presents Tropical Oasis

March 26, 2021 – 8:30 p.m.

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Tropical Oasis

March 26, 2021 8:30 p.m.



Trio for Flute, Oboe and Bassoon, Op. 86

Julius Röntgen
(1855-1932)

Allegretto con spirito
Poco andante, quasi una fantasia
Allegretto – Piu animato – L'istesso tempo – Piu mosso e scherzando –
Tranquillo e dolce – Tempo di primo pezzo – Piu animato

Brush Strokes for Flute, Oboe and Bassoon

Alyssa Morris
(b. 1984)

Monet
Seurat
Van Gogh
Pollock

Penelope Clarke, flute; Colleen Kennedy, oboe;
and Kristy Tucker, bassoon

Danzas de Panama for String Quartet

William Grant Still
(1895-1978)

Tamborito
Mejorana y Socavón
Punto
Cumbia y Congo

Four for Tango

Astor Piazzolla
(1921-1992)

Libertango

Astor Piazzolla
(1921-1992)

Kathlyn Stevens & Adora Wong, violins; Patrick Horn, viola; and Marc
Palmquist, cello

Programme Notes

Trio for Flute, Oboe and Bassoon, Op. 86

Composer: Julius Röntgen (1855-1932)

Composed: 1917

Length: About 14 minutes

Julius Röntgen is an unfamiliar name today, but he was well known during his lifetime as a performer and pedagogue. He came from a musical family in Germany, was a colleague and friend of Brahms and made a name for himself in Amsterdam where he established the Amsterdam Conservatory and was heavily involved in the foundation of the Concertgebouw. As a pianist, he was a sought-after accompanist working for many, including the great violinist Carl Flesch and the famous cello player Pablo Casals.

One writer claims that the reason Röntgen has been forgotten is not because he wrote so little, but because he wrote so much. Apparently, his output "outstripped the ability of any publisher to keep up with him" and until recently only a tiny proportion of the works he had composed was available in print. His music is highly appealing and well-worth discovering. There is a spark to his music, an agreeable tunefulness to his melodies and an interesting lift to his rhythms that hits the mark with many admirers.

The first movement of his Trio, *Allegretto con spirito* is bright, pleasant and perfectly balanced.

The second movement, *Poco andante quasi una fantasia* begins with a potent and evocative oboe solo that starts in silence and builds with impassioned lyricism.

The third movement, *Allegretto* is a set of variations on a dance-like theme that leads to a restatement of music from the very beginning of the piece and then a romp to an exciting finish.

Brush Strokes

Composer: Alyssa Morris (b. 1984)

Composed: 2014

Commissioned by: the Athenia Chamber Ensemble at Ohio University

Length: About 12 minutes

Brush Strokes is a musical depiction of specific works of art. Each movement briefly tells the story of a particular artist and their painting technique.

The first movement, *Monet*, depicts the constant movement of water that is present in many of Claude Monet's paintings. Water lilies are the subject for approximately 250 of his paintings. I also chose to rely on the water lily theme because there are many different images of water to portray. In one part of a stream the water may be calm, while further down the water may rage. Running water is ever changing, much like the swift brush strokes of Claude Monet. An impressionist, Monet's paintings reflected his immediate impression of a particular subject of scene. He strived to capture the subject in a particular light, before the light changed. When the light changed, Monet started painting on a new canvas. I wanted to depict Monet's swift painting and the constant changing of light with frequently shifting chord progressions.

The second movement, *Seurat*, is a musical representation of the pointillist works by Georges Seurat. This movement is primarily inspired by Seurat's paintings *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* and *The Circus*. Seurat's brush stroke technique is very formulaic. If inspected closely, one can see that Seurat's paintings are comprised of tiny strokes of "points" of pure color on the canvas. When the painting is viewed from a distance, the colors appear to blend and shimmer. This color blend effect is called "optical mixing". The music in the movement Seurat aims to depict the pointillist aspects of this artwork by frequently shifting the instrumentation and bouncing the melody from one player to another, and also by the pointed and light attack of every note.

The third movement is *Van Gogh*. This movement depicts one of his best-known paintings, *Starry Night*. Van Gogh lived a life of loneliness and sorrow. Despite his talent as a painter, he was mentally disturbed. In 1889, Van Gogh committed himself to an asylum in Saint-Remy. It was here that he was inspired to paint *Starry Night*. *Starry Night* is filled with curves and rhythm, and the cypress tree in the front exudes a dark loneliness. The movement *Van Gogh* moves with a slow, rhythmic pulse, and a curving melodic contour. The overall darkness of the movement depicts the loneliness of the cypress tree, and of Van Gogh.

Pollock is the final movement and is a musical representation of the works of Jackson Pollock who used the "drip" technique. Paintings such as *One* were created by pouring paint on to a canvas with hardened brushes, stocks, or syringes. Pollock laid his canvas flat on the floor to paint. His process was called action painting. The movement in *Pollock* is fast and full of energy, with chromatic and scalar flourishes depicting the paint being dripped, poured, and flung onto the canvas.

Written by Alyssa Morris

Danzas de Panama for String Quartet

Composer: William Grant Still (1895-1978)

Composed: 1947

First Performed: 1948

Length: About 14 minutes

William Grant Still's Danzas de Panama are based on a collection of Panamanian folk tunes which were collected and popularized by Elizabeth Waldo, an American violinist who toured Latin America in the 1940's, lived in Mexico City and was somewhat an ethnomusicologist. Still's dances are a mix of African, American, Spanish, and Central American elements filled with ingenious details such as the mimicking of percussion instruments by performers knocking on their instruments in the first and last movements. Although the piece is in four movements, each movement has at least two and sometimes three separate dances within it.

The first dance, *Tamborito (Little Drum)*, is performed in Panama with percussive instruments and voice. The drum introduction is repeated at the end of the dance.

Mejorana y Socavón, are improvisatory in style. The instruments traditionally used are the Mejoraneras (guitars playing in counterpoint) and the Rabel (a three-stringed violin).

The third dance, *Punto*, is a graceful dance in six-eight time, featuring a Zapateo (shoe-tapping) section and Paseo (promenade).

The final dances, *Cumbia y Congo*, are the most sensuous and joyous of all the dances in the collection and feature music to which women dance with lighted candles in upraised hands, while the men dance about them with great abandon.

Four for Tango

Libertango

Composer: Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

Composed: 1988 (*Four for Tango*); 1974 (*Libertango*)

Length: About 4 minutes (*Four for Tango*) and 3 minutes (*Libertango*)

Astor Piazzolla was born in Argentina, but his family moved to New York when he was just three. He spent his younger days in the Italian neighborhoods of New York City, where he learned to play the bandoneón - a type of accordion which is an essential component of a tango orchestra. After returning to Buenos Aires in 1937, Piazzolla attended music school and wrote "serious" music. In 1954 he went to Paris to become a student of the celebrated Nadia Boulanger, mentor to many well-known 20th-century composers. After having seen some less-than-inspired works from Piazzolla, Boulanger asked him what kind of music he truly loved to write. He played one of his tangos for her, prompting her to say that this was the music he should be writing - the music from his heart and not from his head. After a year, he returned to Buenos Aires and devoted himself to the tango, formed his own ensemble and started a new genre which became known as *Nuevo Tango* - the New Tango.

Piazzolla wrote *Four for Tango* for the Kronos Quartet. This single-movement work artfully incorporates advanced playing techniques to introduce some decidedly percussive elements into the mix. Even without the characteristic sound of the bandoneón, the sensuous mood is evoked instantly by the sophisticated rhythmic patterns which stamp the music with the composer's signature.

Libertango (meaning Liberty Tango) was recorded and published in Milan. The title is made by combining two words "Libertad" (Spanish for liberty) and "Tango", symbolizing Piazzolla's break from Classical Tango to his beloved and ever-popular Tango Nuevo.

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