

**The Curtis on Tour Brass Quintet**

*Curtis on Tour is the Nina von Maltzahn global touring initiative  
of the Curtis Institute of Music*

Saturday, January 23, 2021

2:00 PM

Bethel United Methodist Church Hall  
Lewes, DE

PROGRAM

*A Suite of Dances*

*La Mourisque  
Bransle Quatre Bransles  
Ronde  
Basse Danse Bergeret  
Ronde: Mon Amy  
Pavane Battaille*

Tylman Susato  
(1500–1561)

*Quintet*

Michael Kamen  
(1948–2003)

*Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor, BWV 582*

Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685–1750)  
arr. Neil Balm

*Quintet No. 1, Op. 73*

*Allegro vivace  
Chaconne: Andante con moto  
Con brio*

Malcolm Arnold  
(1921–2006)

INTERMISSION

*“Sdegno la fiamma estinse”*

Alessandro Scarlatti  
(1660–1725)

*Copperwave*

Joan Tower  
(b. 1938)

*Porgy and Bess Suite*

*Overture to Catfish Row  
Summertime  
A Woman Is a Sometime Thing  
My Man’s Gone Now  
I Got Plenty o’ Nuttin’  
Bess, You Is My Woman Now  
Oh Lawd, I’m On My Way*

George Gershwin  
(1898–1937)  
arr. Jack Gale

## Program Notes

### SUSATO

*A Suite of Dances from Danserye (1551)*

Not much is known about Susato's early life, but he begins appearing in various Antwerp archives of around 1530, working as a calligrapher as well as an instrumentalist: trumpet, flute and tenor pipe are listed as instruments that he owned. It is possible that Susato also ran a musical instrument business. In 1543, he founded a highly successful music publishing house.

As a choral composer, Susato wrote (and published) several books of masses and motets which are in the typical style of the time, as well as two books of *chansons* for two or three voices; these were specifically designed to be sung by young, inexperienced singers.

Additionally, Susato was a prolific composer of instrumental music, much of which is still performed today. His book of dance music, *Danserye*, is comprised of 46 pieces in simple but artistic arrangement.

*La Mourisque* (Moorish dance, or *Moresca*) in the sixteenth century was a type of "exotic" dance which was associated in the parlance of the time with the Moors (European Muslims).

*Bransle Quatre Bransles*: The *bransle* was performed by a chain of dancers, usually in couples, with linked arms or holding hands. The dance alternated a number of larger sideways steps to the left (often four) with the same number of smaller steps to the right, so that the chain moved gradually to the left. It is still danced in France today.

*Ronde*: This was a lively Renaissance country dance, in which the participants danced in a circle or a line.

*Basse Danse Bergeret* (Shepherd's low dance) was popular in the 15th and early 16th centuries, especially at the Burgundian court. The word *basse* describes the fact that partners move quietly and gracefully in a slow gliding or walking motion without leaving the floor. The *basse danse* was a precursor of the *pavane*, a dignified processional dance.

*Ronde: Mon Amy*: Country round dance titled "My Friend".

*Pavane Battaille*: The Battle Pavane was a dignified processional dance common in Europe during the 16th century. The *pavane* was a successor of the *basse danse*.

## KAMEN

### *Quintet (2001)*

Michael Kamen grew up in Queens, New York, where his liberal-activist parents subjected him to copious doses of protest songs from the likes of Leadbelly Ledbetter and Pete Seeger, alongside a steady diet of classical music. He began playing the piano at the age of two, and during the 1960s studied the oboe at the Juilliard School.

The eclectic Kamen, however, found himself unable to resist the sound of The Beatles and the flood of music that followed them. While still at Juilliard, he formed the New York Rock And Roll Ensemble, which sought to weld together rock and classical music, and made the highly-regarded album *Roll Over* (1970). The Ensemble essayed several collaborations with symphony orchestras during their seven-year career. The largely unexplored area between rock and classical music was Kamen's passion, and he became a specialist in adding a classical-like sheen and gravitas to projects rooted in rock music. His orchestral arrangements for Pink Floyd's original recording of *The Wall* were formidable.

In his film work, Kamen proved adept at meeting the demands for both full scale orchestral scores and memorable pop tunes. His 28 soundtracks ranged from fringe-indie to blockbuster. They included *X-Men* (2000), *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves* (1991) and Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985). For television, he wrote music for the nuclear thriller *Edge of Darkness* (1985), featuring guitar work by Eric Clapton, and composed the haunting theme for *Band of Brothers* (2001).

Kamen worked with Bob Dylan, David Bowie and Aerosmith; the 1999 live album he made with the heavy metal group Metallica sold more than 4 million copies. He wrote ballet scores, and conducted Pavarotti at his all-star Modena charity concerts. He was the musical director for the Queen's golden jubilee celebrations at Buckingham Palace, and conductor of the 1990 performance of Pink Floyd's *The Wall* in Berlin.

Kamen, whose frizzy hair and beard betrayed his underlying hippy-era values - even when he was wearing a dinner suit - cherished an idealistic belief in the beneficial properties of music. He was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1996, though he had not spoken about his condition publicly until he received the Dorothy Corwin Spirit Of Life Award at a meeting of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in California in 2003. He died aged 55 of a heart attack, leaving a huge legacy of music spanning many genres. Even a brief cross-section of his achievements suggests an artist driven by a feverish urge to resist typecasting.

Written for Canadian Brass, *Quintet* quickly earned a place in the standard brass quintet repertoire. It is a short reflective essay, emphasizing warmth and lyricism. It opens with an elegiac theme for the horn, which is developed contrapuntally with great eloquence to a noble climax, before subsiding to a softly assured cadence. Michael Kamen wrote *Quintet* at the request of his Juilliard classmate and former Canadian Brass trumpeter Ronald Romm.

## **BACH**

### *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor, BWV 582 (ca. 1710)*

This is one of Bach's most important and well-known works, composed most likely for organ, when the composer was in his twenties. Like many of Bach's works, this piece lends itself particularly well to the brass repertoire.

It begins with a simple, repeating statement - a quietly unassuming, stepping *passacaglia* bass line, deep in a low register. The melody of this *passacaglia* - a form which has roots in Spanish street dances - may have been borrowed from earlier works of other composers. Free borrowing of musical ideas was common in the baroque period, as it is today in the world of jazz. It's what Bach does with this musical building block that sets this work apart. Twenty variations develop over the *passacaglia* "foundation," each seemingly more daring than the previous. Robert Schumann described these variations as "intertwined so ingeniously that one can never cease to be amazed." It remains an important piece even today as it sets the standard for the *passacaglia* form.

Just when one seems to be free of the *passacaglia* line, it breaks into fragments and forms the subjects of the double fugue as a kind of "musical hologram." As the fugue reaches its climax, a *fermata* chord sends the work into the final cadence.

## **ARNOLD**

### *Quintet No. 1, Op. 73 (1961)*

English composer Malcolm Arnold studied composition at London's Royal Conservatory of Music. Early in his career, Arnold was principal trumpet of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, but subsequently concentrated solely on composing. He generated a large body of film scores (he won an Academy Award for the music to *Bridge on the River Kwai*), ballets, operas, works for orchestra and band, and chamber music.

The development of Arnold's compositional style can be traced step-by-step to his teenage years as a young trumpet student. Arnold studied with the principal trumpet for London Philharmonic Orchestra, and thereby learned orchestral music from the inside out, acquiring compositional techniques by playing them in an ensemble. He also studied jazz, which influenced his stylistic idiom. Arnold often wrote for his friends and colleagues in the London Philharmonic Orchestra, infusing their personalities into his pieces. Much of his income came from composing film music after World War II, so he studied different music forms from around the world in order to gain a greater understanding of them. The culmination of all of Arnold's musical experience led to a musical language that combined jazz and classical styles, utilized exciting rhythmic and harmonic treatment, and was balanced between humor and seriousness.

The *Quintet No. 1* is quintessential Arnold. The quick outer movements sparkle, with characteristically brisk metronome marks setting the two trumpets, often in close canon,

against the trio of horn, trombone and tuba. The middle movement, a *chaconne*, is dark and tragic, but is followed with hope in the third movement. His intimate playing knowledge of brass from his London Philharmonic Orchestra days is revealed by his expert use of the contrast of tone color and timbre of the brass family in different registers throughout the work. The quintet is remarkable for the equal virtuosity expected from each player.

This work was commissioned and first performed by the New York Brass Quintet (NYBQ). The work's direct style, catchy melodies and audience appeal ensured immediate success on both sides of the Atlantic and did much to launch and popularize the brass quintet as a viable recital ensemble. The success of Arnold's *Quintet* led to a flowering of brass quintet repertoire, and a proliferation of virtuoso ensembles, over the following two decades.

## SCARLATTI

*"Sdegno la fiamma estinse"* (I disdain the extinguished flame) (1715)

Alessandro Scarlatti was one of the most celebrated composers of his time, and probably the most important opera composer in Europe around 1700. Yet, in the early 21st century, he is one of the lesser-performed Baroque composers, and a considerable part of his immense output is not well known. The renown of the "*Palermitano*," as he was always called after his place of birth in Sicily, started in Rome before he was twenty, where his first operas earned the favor of Queen Christina of Sweden. Later he was to establish relationships with several other important patrons, including Ferdinando de' Medici, James III Stuart (the "Old Pretender"), and Queen Casimira of Poland; cardinals such as Pietro Ottoboni; and the Spanish viceroys of Naples—who were all in turn responsible for supporting his international career. One sign of Scarlatti's reputation among upper society was his acceptance into Rome's Academy of the Arcadia. He was one of only three musicians of his time admitted to this otherwise purely literary academy.

Scarlatti's operas were presented in many important theaters in Italy and abroad. Nevertheless he was continuously under pressure for money, as he had ten children (including his celebrated son, the composer Domenico). He wrote no fewer than 60 dramatic works and more than 600 chamber cantatas throughout his working life. The rest of his musical compositions include oratorios, liturgical music, and a few instrumental pieces.

Scarlatti also continued the Renaissance tradition of composing music for madrigals, writing eight in all. These settings of secular texts were probably intended for ensembles of singers, perhaps accompanied by a discreet continuo group, or possibly sung *a cappella*. *Sdegno la fiamma estinse* was written for five voices. It is typical of the genre both in its dramatic alternation of recitative-like chordal passages with sophisticated imitative sections, as well as in its use of melodic figures, dissonance and silence to

convey the meaning of the text. This text was authored by poet Orsina Cavalletta (publ. Bergamo, 1587), and roughly translates as:

“I disdain the extinguished flame and blunted the dart and untied the knot that burned me, that pierced me, and that bound me.

“My heart no longer fears the bond nor the wound, nor the burning, nor cares if your eyes flash, perfidious one!

“Or if they are serene, for, happily free from the amorous snare, it disdains the fire, the arrow and the trap”.

## **TOWER**

*Copperwave (2006)*

Born in New Rochelle, New York, Joan Tower spent nine childhood years in Bolivia. She performed her undergraduate studies at Bennington College and graduate work at Columbia University (from which she earned both M.A. and D.M.A. degrees).

Many of Tower’s earliest works were composed for the Da Capo Chamber Players in New York, of which she was a founding member, and for which she served as pianist from 1969 to 1984. After gaining recognition for her first orchestral composition, *Sequoia* (1981), a tone poem which structurally depicts a giant tree from trunk to needles, she went on to compose a variety of instrumental works. These included several that paid homage to composers such as Beethoven (*Concerto for Piano*), Stravinsky (*Petroushskates*), and Copland (*Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman*). She was the first composer chosen for a *Ford Made in America* consortium commission. The resulting work was performed in every state of the union during the 2005-2007 season. The 2008 recording of this piece won three Grammy Awards. Tower’s other works include the *Island Prelude*, five string quartets, and an assortment of other tone poems.

Joan Tower has been lauded by *The New Yorker* as "one of the most successful woman composers of all time", while her bold and energetic compositions have been performed in concert halls around the world. Known as a generous and compassionate colleague, Tower has served frequently as consultant, lecturer, panelist, and mentor to people and institutions in music and academia. She is currently Asher Edelman Professor of Music at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, where she has taught since 1972. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and serves on the Artistic Advisory panel of the BMI (Broadcast Music, Inc.) Foundation.

### Composer’s note

“*Copperwave* was commissioned for the American Brass Quintet by the Juilliard School for its centennial celebration. This commission was supported by the Trust of Francis Goelet. The work is dedicated with great admiration to the distinguished American Brass Quintet.

“My father was a geologist and mining engineer and I grew up loving everything to do with minerals and rocks. Copper is a heavy but flexible mineral that is used for many

different purposes, and most brass instruments are made of copper. The ideas in this piece move in waves, sometimes heavy ones and at other times lighter - also in circles, turning around on the same notes. Occasionally, there is a Latin type of rhythm [conga] that appears, which is a reminder of my years growing up in South America...”.

## **GERSHWIN**

### *Porgy and Bess Suite (1936)*

Gershwin's ambition to write a real opera, rather than musicals, culminated in 1935 in *Porgy and Bess*, a blending of spirituals, jazz and blues, that is probably his most enduring stage work. It is a gritty story of life and death in Catfish Row, one of the poor black tenements of Charleston, South Carolina. Gershwin stipulated that his “American folk opera” always be performed by an African-American cast. He arranged an orchestral suite from the music a year later.

The genesis of *Porgy and Bess* began with the 1925 publication of DuBose Heyward's short novel *Porgy*. When George Gershwin read *Porgy*, the story of a disabled beggar living in a Charleston tenement complex called Catfish Row, and his love for the disreputable Bess, he contacted Heyward with the idea of making an opera of it. Gershwin was, however, in no hurry to work on this project, having plenty of commissions for Broadway shows. So Heyward and his wife, Dorothy, turned *Porgy* into a hugely successful play that ran for over a year on Broadway.

Finally, by early 1934 Gershwin was working in earnest on the project. Heyward condensed his play and wrote the lyrics for many of the songs, while Ira, Gershwin's brother and frequent collaborator, came on board to polish some of Heyward's lyrics and write others. The collaboration worked splendidly, with Heyward writing poetry that George set to music, and Ira more often setting words to music that George had already composed. Many of these songs have been considered American classics from the very first. In the concert hall *Porgy and Bess* has had countless performances and the work's popularity has held steady over the years. George Gershwin's score has maintained a strong concert-hall presence since 1935, circulating most widely in his own *Porgy and Bess Suite*. The sequence in the suite follows along with the story:

- The rousing opening *Overture to Catfish Row* segues quickly into the most quietly rapturous song of the opera, *Summertime*, sung by the young mother Clara. Her husband, Jake, counters her lullaby with *A Woman Is a Sometime Thing*. After the brutal Crown kills a man during the craps shoot that follows, *My Man's Gone Now* is sung by Serena, the wife of the murdered man.
- In the next act Porgy, with banjo accompaniment, sings of his happy-thought-penniless life, *I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'*, and joins Bess in the opera's great love duet, *Bess, You Is My Woman Now*.

- When Porgy returns to Catfish Row to find Bess gone, we hear the opera's finale, whose music is joyful - though the dramatic situation is poignant as Porgy resolves to follow after Bess with *Oh, Lawd, I'm On My Way*.