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Music: Virtuoso Series Concert, Leslie Stewart, Violin
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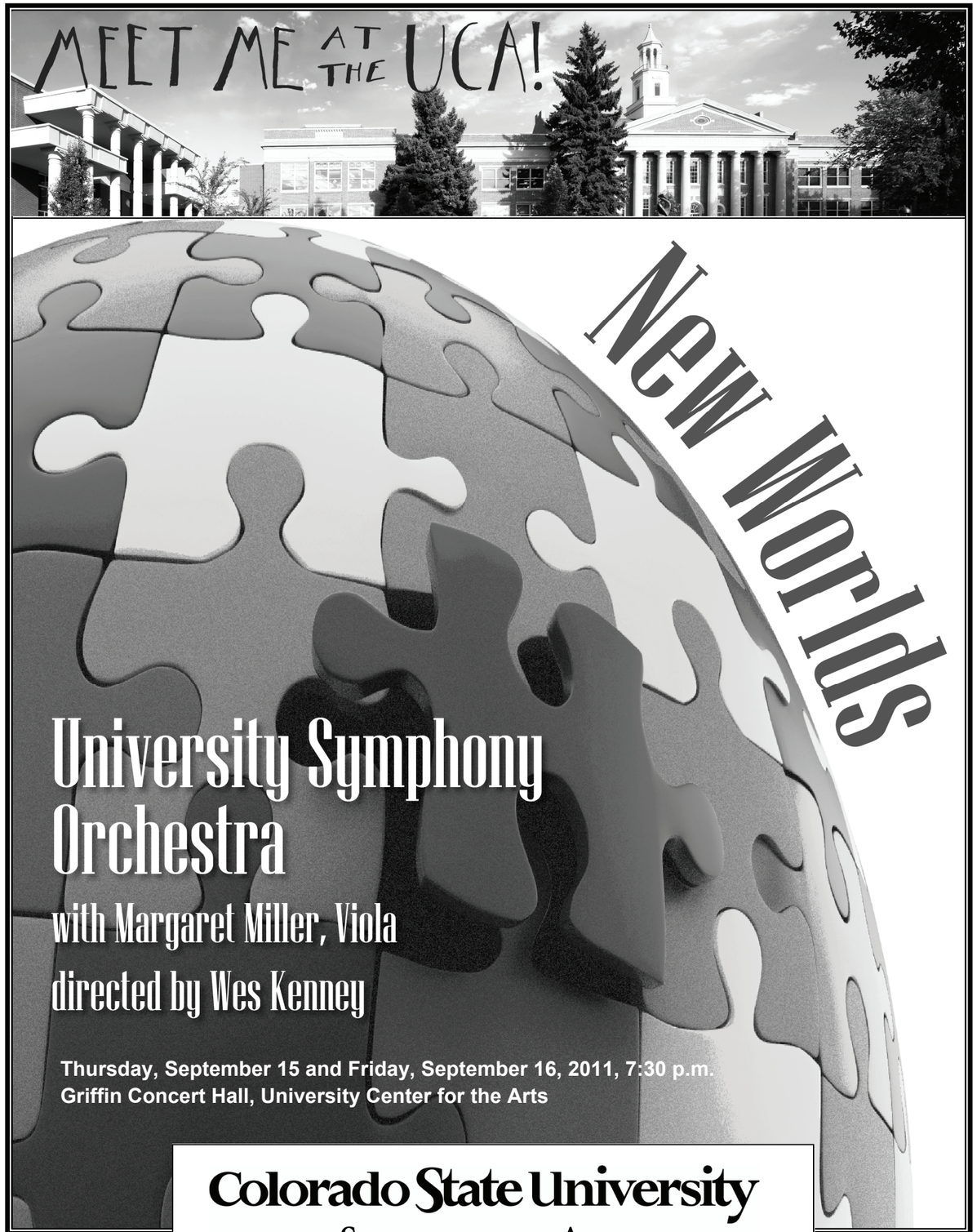

Colorado State University
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

CSU Symphony

Wes Kenney, Director
Margaret Miller, Viola

September 15, 2011, 7:30 PM
September 16, 2011, 7:30 PM

The Age of American Passions (1999) — Stephen Paulus (b. 1949)

I. Animosities
II. In the Spirit of Compassion

Viola Concerto (1945) — Béla Bartók (1881 – 1945)

I. Moderato
II. Adagio religioso
III. Allegro vivace

Intermission

Symphony No. 9 in E minor "From the New World" — Antonín Dvořák (1841 – 1904)

I. Adagio – Allegro molto
II. Largo
III. Molto vivace
IV. Allegro con fuoco

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PROGRAM NOTES

Symphony No. 9 in E minor

The Symphonies of Antonin Dvorak are known and respected worldwide and were composed in the German Romantic tradition, with some of his own nationalistic flare. He is sometimes compared to Beethoven, and often referred to as the "Bohemian Brahms" because of his emulation of these great symphonic composers. Similar to Beethoven, Dvorak composed 9 symphonies, the last of which is the most widely recognized. Symphony No. 9, *From the New World* was created shortly after Dvorak's arrival in America, where he was hired as the artistic director of the New York National Conservatory in 1892. Dvorak's reputation as a Czech Nationalist composer preceded him, and he came to America with the intention of developing a new nationalist approach to music in the United States.

Dvorak drew much of his inspiration for Symphony No. 9 from the music of Native American and African American cultures, embracing the folk traditions of the "New World" to which he had journeyed. The entire symphony is epic in scope, with themes varying from tender and sentimental melodies to heroic fanfares of conquest and strife. The first movement opens with a beautiful melody carried by the cello section, but quickly gives way to a heroic theme of conquest in the brass which draws the listener in and engages every performer in a full scale drama reminiscent of the collision of nature and society.

The second and third movements of the symphony are known to be inspired by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem *The Song of Hiawatha.* The elegant and beautiful tune carried by solo English horn in the opening of the second movement brings to mind nature in all her beauty. The counter melody played later by the strings presents a dilemma; its lyricism evokes a melancholy longing, perhaps of love, or of a love lost.

The third movement is a lively and nimble Scherzo whose theme is passed around the orchestra. Again the folk-like influences are prevalent, but Dvorak undoubtedly incorporates the familiar Bohemian cultural qualities and his homeland.

The finale of Symphony No. 9, *From the New World*, is a suspenseful journey. The listener is transported back in time to experience the triumph and legacy of a nation being born. The force of the first movement returns with even greater intensity, evolving to incorporate themes found throughout the rest of the symphony. One would expect such a finale to end in an incredible booming manner. Dvorak, however, opts for a more sentimental recognition of a world that was truly new; a world full of people whose stories are waiting to be discovered.

Thank you to our patrons who have supported the Department of Music, Theatre and Dance in the past year. As advocates of the performing arts at Colorado State University, your gifts and patronage contribute to the breath taking performance you are witnessing tonight. We would like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank you for your gift.

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*Note: The names featured on the following page are those of our supporters in Fiscal Year 2011. We apologize if your name is not represented here. If your name is missing please contact Marilyn Bistline at the above e-mail address and phone number

BIOGRAPHIES

Wes Kenney was named last November as the 2009 Outstanding Teacher by the Colorado American String Teachers Association. He was also awarded the Grand Prize in the Summer 2007 Varna (Bulgaria) International Conducting Competition. He traveled back to Bulgaria in March 2008 for concerts in Vidin and to conduct *La Traviata* in Stara Zagora. Mr. Kenney is Professor of Music and Director of Orchestras at Colorado State University where he conducts the CSU Symphony and Chamber Orchestra as well as CSU Opera productions. He is also currently in his ninth season as Music Director of the Fort Collins Symphony. In the summer of 2004 he was named to an additional post of Music Director of Opera Fort Collins helping that organization establish a full season of three productions a season. This season he renewed a relationship with bands stepping in to conduct CSU's Wind Ensemble while a search for a permanent director begins.

Mr. Kenney is a frequent guest conductor of professional and educational ensembles. He has appeared in the past three seasons with the Virginia Symphony, the Symphony of Southeast Texas, the Vallejo (CA) Symphony and the New Mexico All-State Orchestra. Prior to that, Maestro Kenney has guest conducted at the Edinburgh Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland, the Buffalo Philharmonic, returned to the New Mexico Symphony for tours and performances of *The Nutcracker* and had debuts with the Williamsburg Symphonia (VA), and the Acadiana Symphony (LA). In six seasons as the Virginia Symphony's Associate Conductor, Mr. Kenney appeared more than 350 times with that orchestra. He was responsible for the programming and conducting of Subscription, Pops, Family and Young People's Concerts.

Mr. Kenney was Co-principal Conductor of the Oakland Lyric Opera for four seasons and Music Director of the Virginia Ballet Theater. Awarded the prestigious Carmen Dragon Conducting Prize in 1992, Wes Kenney served as Music Director of the Oakland Youth Orchestra for five seasons.

Mr. Kenney has also enjoyed success directing from the orchestra pit for opera, ballet, and musical theater. During the 2011-12 Season he will conduct productions of *Carmen, Amahl and the Night Visitors, Sweeney Todd, Turn of the Screw,* and *Barber of Seville*. In the past five season's he has conducted *Madama Butterfly, Cenerentola, Rigoletto, Tosca, Die Zauberflote, Die Fledermaus,* and *La Traviata.Il Trovatore, Street Scene, La Boheme, Pagliacci, Cavelleria Rusticana, Falstaff, La Traviata, Turandot. Marriage of Figaro, The Merry Widow, Aida, Don Giovanni,* and *Tenderland.*

This past summer he was a guest lecturer at the Conductor's Institute held at Bard College in upstate New York, teaching alongside founder Harold Farberman and American Symphony Orchestra Music Director Leon Botstein.

Margaret Miller has been a member of the CSU music faculty since 2004 where she teaches viola and chamber music and is coordinator of the Graduate Quartet Program. Prior to coming to CSU, she was violist of the Da Vinci Quartet for eighteen years; during that time the quartet toured throughout the United States and were prizewinners in the Shostakovich Quartet Competition. The Quartet also recorded the complete chamber music of Arthur Foote and Charles Martin Loeffler for the Naxos American Classics label.

As a recitalist and teacher, she has performed throughout Colorado and has given master classes at Kansas State, Ft. Lewis College and at Colorado College. In 2011 she was awarded the honor of Teacher of the Year by the Colorado chapter of the American String Teacher Association, and in 2010 received the Private Teacher award from the Colorado Springs Youth Symphony Association.

Active in state organizations, she has presented sessions at the Colorado Music Educators Association convention,the Colorado ASTA convention, and has judged for the Colorado State Music Teachers competition. She is also a judge for the Pikes Peak Young Composers competition.

CSU Symphony Orchestra

Wes Kenney, Director and Conductor

Flute
Brianne Little, Principal
Sam Hood, Asst. Principal
Lindsey Noble, Asst. Principal

Piccolo
Sam Hood

Oboe
Caleb Bradley, Principal
Shane Werts, Asst. Principal
Whitney Walker

English Horn
Shane Werts

Clarinet
Roxanne Cortes, Principal
Tom Wilson, Asst. Principal

Bassoon
Jessie Sawyer, Principal
Lynn Bonomo, Asst. Principal

Trumpet
Tony Whitehead, Principal
Ryan Sullivan, Asst. Principal
Scott Weber

Horn
Kyle Sunday, Principal
Christie Bass, Asst. Principal
Noelle Bauman
Molly Salika
Julia Williams

Trombone
Dave Ellis, Principal
Logan Kingston, Asst. Principal
Jesse Sylvester

Bass Trombone
Will Gamache

Tuba
Chris Krueger

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Brandon Arvay, Asst. Principal
Mark Coup
Ben Justis

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Hannah Barnes, Concertmaster
Rachael Napper, Asst. Concertmaster
Katharine Anderson
Julianna Byess
Lydia Demi-Smith
Nicole Fassold
Cheryl Fox
Meghan Hainer
Hae Sun Kim
Allison Rickel
Jaclyn Salts
Patrick Weseman

Violin II
Karmen Mitchell, Principal
Olivia Trinko, Asst. Principal
Jayme Cole
Melissa Gross
Haley Heer
Royston Hunget
Natalie Jones
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Brittany Schaeffner
Lucas Thompson
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Chealsea Bernhardt, Asst. Principal
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PROGRAM NOTES

The Age of American Passions

Stephen Paulus' piece *The Age of American Passions* was premiered in 1999 by the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra to celebrate their 50th anniversary. Through inspiration from many books about America in the 18th century and with the intent to portray American spirit in the piece for the orchestra's anniversary, Paulus grasped the idea of America's ability to develop ideas and plans during the post-revolutionary era, rather than settling down. This spirit or passion of continuous development for the nation was referred to as "the age of American passions" in one of the books Paulus read and greatly supported his idea of the American spirit he wanted to portray in the piece.

The first movement, *Animosities*, reflects the challenges Americans faced during the planning stages of the post-revolutionary era. This can be heard throughout the movement in the aggressive rhythms and dissonant harmonies. Even with the disagreements, conflicts, and an overwhelming variety of ideas, the American spirit enabled growth and development. The forward motion portrayed in this movement from the quick rhythmic figures and interruptions reflects this strength of the American spirit.

The second movement, *In the Spirit of Compassion*, reflects the peace-making side of the American spirit. The movement begins with a tranquil melody in the violas, eventually supported by the cellos. Interrupting this mood, the outburst in the orchestra threatens the peace. However, the American spirit demonstrates adaptability and conciliatory characteristics. This is reflected in the music as the outburst transitions into a pleasing and warm melody in the strings.

Notes by Karmen Mitchell

Viola Concerto

Béla Bartók is commonly known as one of the first ethnomusicologists. He, along with his friend and fellow musician Zoltán Kodály would go into the Hungarian countryside and make recordings of the locals singing folk music on wax cylinders. Many of the folk tunes Bartók heard and recorded made their way into his compositions, and his Viola Concerto is no exception

Bartók was commissioned by the prominent violist William Primrose to write this concerto in the spring of 1945. At the time he was living with his wife in New York, evading the Second World War which was affecting Hungary, his homeland. At first, Bartók was hesitant to take the job, stating he didn't really know how the viola worked as a solo instrument. Primrose recommended he listen to his upcoming performance of the Walton Viola Concerto to give him some ideas. After hearing the piece, Bartók agreed to write the work.

The Viola Concerto is possibly the last piece the Hungarian composer ever wrote. While working on Primrose's piece and a piano concerto for his wife's birthday, he was taken ill and died September 26th. A well-known letter written to Primrose from Bartók describes the character of the work in some detail.

> "The somber, more masculine character of your instrument exerted some influence on the general character of the work…I exploit rather frequently the lower register. It is conceived in a rather virtuoso style. Most probably some passages will prove to be uncomfortable or unplayable."

The piece was never completed by Bartók. There are, in existence, only 13 pages of manuscript written by the composer. The edition you are hearing this evening was completed by a close friend of Bartók's; Tibor Serly. However, other editions have been made over the years, often with drastic changes. Two great examples of the contrasting versions take place in the latter half of the concerto. Before the beginning of the third movement, the viola has some quartal chords (pitches being derived from the interval of the fourth). In one version, these are played with the bow; in another they are plucked. The second example takes place in the second half of the third movement. Between the ravenously quick sections of the movement, there is a melodic gypsy-like interlude. Tibor Serly's version has this in A major. An edition of the concerto created by his son, has this section a half-step lower, completely written in harmonics, giving it a softer, more airy feel. This piece continues to remain a vital work for the viola as well as fodder for the musical scholar.

Notes by Sabrina Romney