

Quad City Symphony Orchestra

PROGRAM NOTES

Masterworks I: Statement

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ALBERTO GINASTERA (1916-1983) *Estancia* Suite, Op. 8a, “Malambo”

Instrumentation: 1 piccolo, 1 flute (also doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, 5 percussion, piano, and strings.

Premiere: May 12, 1943, Teatro Colon Orchestra, Ferruccio Calusio conducting, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

QCSO Performance History: Alondra de la Parra guest-conducted the “Malambo” movement from *Estancia* in February 2012. The QCSO has performed the entire suite twice, in 1962 with Charles Gigante and in 1969 with James Dixon.

In the mid-1940s, the promising young Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera travelled to the famed Tanglewood Festival in western Massachusetts to study with Aaron Copland. The elder composer was reportedly highly impressed with the man from South America, and perhaps even then Copland recognized that he and Ginastera would end up on remarkably parallel paths. Indeed, the works of both men have ultimately come to embody the national style of concert music in their respective countries. Paradoxically, both would suffer the adverse effects of political conflict in their homelands, Ginastera under the dictator Juan Perón and his successors, and Copland under Senator Joseph McCarthy’s House Un-American Activities Committee. For Copland, the political turmoil contributed to

what was effectively decades-long writer’s block; for Ginastera, political conflict would contribute to his self-imposed exile to Switzerland for the last 13 years of his life.

The similarities between the two composers’ work is perhaps nowhere more evident than in *Estancia*, Ginastera’s cowboy-themed ballet (sound familiar?). *Estancia* was composed for George Balanchine’s upstart troupe known as American Ballet Caravan, the same group that commissioned *Billy the Kid* from Copland in 1938. *Estancia*, drawing its life from Argentine folk music, is typical of what Ginastera dubbed his early period of “objective nationalism”; his more complicated and introspective “subjective nationalism” would come later.

“Malambo” Listening Guide

♩ **RHYTHM:** Unlike the *tango*, that world-famous Argentine dance for couples, *malambo* was intended for performance by one highly skilled male dancer, stomping and tapping to a relentless duple meter (two beats per bar). Dancers often perform *malambo* with whizzing *boleadoras*, or long ropes with ball-weights at either end that can be whirled around or smacked against the floor to produce complex cross-rhythms. Ginastera’s *malambo* reflects both of these factors: a driving,

unwavering two-beat meter against which many other, more intricate rhythms compete.

♫ **TEXTURE:** Notice Ginastera's use of layering; he will often repeat a simple pattern in several instruments, gradually adding other layers above or below it.

♫ **ORCHESTRATION:** As one might expect from a Latin American dance, percussion instruments play a crucial role in this work, particularly xylophone, castanets, and tambourine. Notice also how some percussive effects originate from other sections of the orchestra, like the zipping *portamenti* (slides) in the strings.

JENNIFER HIGDON (b. 1962)

Soliloquy for cello and string orchestra

Instrumentation: Solo cello and strings

Premiere: The original version, for English horn and strings, premiered in 1989 with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, Peter Smith, soloist, in Philadelphia.

QCSO Premiere.

It is difficult to imagine a living composer more celebrated than Jennifer Higdon. At age 57, among her many honors are the Pulitzer Prize in music, two GRAMMY Awards, and Northwestern University's prestigious Nemmers Prize. But more importantly, her music is widely performed and embraced by both performers and audiences. In her scores she deftly combines both familiar and astonishing sounds, and her work projects intense emotion coupled with unmistakable goodwill.

As Higdon began composing only at age 21, her *Soliloquy* is an early work, written at the age of 27. Originally for solo English horn and strings, the work exists in no fewer than

eight versions for various solo instruments and accompanying ensembles. This technique of composing multiple versions of a single work with varying instrumentation, employed recently by composers as varied as Arvo Pärt and Karlheinz Stockhausen, emerged somewhat unexpectedly in the last decades of the twentieth century, running counter to predominating trend of ever-more-individualized instrumental writing.

Soliloquy Listening Guide

♫ **AFFECT:** Higdon's elegant harmonies and meandering melodies, described by the composer as "thoughtful" and "plaintive", easily suggests a warm, poignant mood to the listener. But, like Brahms before her, she avoids over-prescribing how a listener should experience the emotion of the work, explaining simply that the piece "is purely musical thought."

♫ **TEXTURE:** Higdon's work is intensely *contrapuntal*, meaning that each instrument is always playing a melody. The conglomeration of the varying number of simultaneous melodies in turn produces her rich, pungent harmonies. Try listening to any section of the orchestra at any point throughout the work to hear it play its own, unique melody.

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD (1897-1957)

Cello Concerto in C Major, Op. 37

Instrumentation: Solo cello, 2 flutes (second doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (second doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons (second doubling contrabassoon), 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, 3 percussion, harp, celesta, piano, and strings.

Premiere: December 29, 1946; Eleanor Aller-Slatkin, cello with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Henry Svedrofsky, conducting.

QCSO Premiere.

Although the connection between the cinema and the concert hall may seem obvious enough, composers have not always had an easy time in adapting to the expectations of Hollywood. After emigrating to Los Angeles to flee the Third Reich, modernist Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg failed to find a film director willing to accede to his demands for total control over any film for which he was to compose the music. Maurice Ravel had the ambition to produce an opera suitable for animation by Walt Disney, but his *L'enfant et les sortilèges* proved far too subtle, peculiar, and sophisticated for mass consumption. And Igor Stravinsky, though initially charmed by Disney, ultimately detested the animation of *The Rite of Spring* that Disney produced as part of the film *Fantasia*, and complained loudly of being financially exploited by the studio.

Yet, there were a few classically-trained composers who successfully embarked on careers in Hollywood, and perhaps the most remarkable of these was Erich Korngold. An extraordinarily gifted child prodigy, as an adult he was lured from his native Austria to California by director Max Reinhardt to

adapt Mendelssohn's incidental music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for film. Like his compatriot Schoenberg, Korngold was Jewish, so his migration in the mid-1930s proved highly fortuitous in many ways, and he went on to enjoy a highly successful career at Warner Brothers Studios. He became a U.S. citizen in 1943.

In 1946, Korngold wrote the score for the film *Deception*, starring Bette Davis. The film's highly sensational plot centers around the sultry affairs of a number of classical musicians, including a composer who writes a cello concerto, before being murdered by the soloist's jealous wife (of course). As the process of composing the score necessitated writing many passages for solo cello and orchestra, Korngold cleverly decided to adapt the film score into an actual cello concerto, which was premiered in Los Angeles the same year as the film's release.

Korngold Cello Concerto Listening Guide

♫ **MELODY:** Although this work is by no means devoid of counterpoint, Korngold's concerto is much more *homophonic* than Higdon's. This means that the orchestra is highly responsive to the solo cello and generally acts as a subservient accompanist. Even when the soloist is not playing, the music remains predominantly *homophonic*, meaning it is quite clear who in the orchestra has the most important melodic line.

♫ **FORM:** Although this piece is in a single movement, the overall form resembles a full, multi-movement concerto in miniature. Like we ordinarily expect from the first movement of a classical concerto, Korngold quickly establishes

two contrasting ideas in the first couple of minutes of the work: a fast and furious “first theme” and a sentimental, tender “second theme”. But unlike a traditional first movement, he simply restates the “first theme”, writes a cadenza, then begins a slow, melancholy section, resembling a slow movement.

♫ **ORCHESTRATION:** Korngold’s lush scoring betrays the work’s dual origins in German Romanticism and Hollywood. In the lugubrious middle section, listen especially for an extended flute solo.

DAVID DZUBAY (b. 1964)

Autumn Rivulets for soprano and orchestra

Instrumentation: Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, 4 percussion, harp, piano, strings.

QCSO Commission.

World Premiere.

The composer writes:

Jointly commissioned by the Quad City Symphony Orchestra and its music director Mark Russell Smith and the Indiana University School of Music and Dean Gwyn Richards through the “Decade of Commissions” initiative, Autumn Rivulets, for soprano and orchestra, was composed in celebration of Walt Whitman’s 200th birthday in 2019 and also of the bicentennial of the founding of Indiana University in 2020.

Autumn Rivulets sets three streams (or rivulets) of text, autumnal in tone, reflecting on life, death and truth: Walt Whitman’s “As Consequent, etc.” from Leaves of Grass

(Book XXIV: Autumn Rivulets); Dylan Thomas’s “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”; and some brief quotations about “truth” by John Keats, Mark Twain, St. Augustine, Batman, Rudy Giuliani, and IU’s own Thomas Gieryn.

The composition has an arch or wave-like formal design. Whitman begins and ends the work, but along the way alternates stanzas with Thomas and the “truth” quotes. The Whitman sections often reflect the water imagery of the text, with drifting currents and waves reflected in the harmony and rhythms; while mostly a calm traversal of America, the “currents” build toward “the storm’s abysmic waves, ...Raging over the vast...” before ending with gently lapping waves gradually disappearing... “Wash’d on America’s shores.”

The “truth” quotes are presented as two moments of repose in the piece, and perhaps somehow bridge or at least separate the Whitman and Thomas texts a bit. A third stream seemed necessary to make the combination work.

While the Whitman is grand and universal in tone and perspective, the Thomas is utterly personal and wrenching. I am sure we all have our own thoughts and feelings about the famous poem Dylan Thomas wrote for his dying father. My mother died in January 2019 at home in Portland; that day I was composing the Whitman section for “Some half-hid in Oregon.” My father is in fairly good health, but is in his 80s; I certainly hope he will “rage against the dying of the light” for years to come.

Autumn Rivulets is dedicated with love to my parents, Dale and Edith Dzubay.

TEXTS

Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

Leaves of Grass

Book XXIV: Autumn Rivulets

"As Consequent, Etc." (1881)

As consequent from store of summer rains,
Or wayward rivulets in autumn flowing,
Or many a herb-lined brook's reticulations,
Or subterranean sea-rills making for the
 sea,
Songs of continued years I sing.

Truth is beauty (**John Keats**)

(Truth) is stranger than fiction (**Mark Twain**)

Truth is also a place (**Thomas Gieryn**)

Gieryn, Thomas (June 14, 2018). Aeon.co. And,
Truth-Spots: How Places Make People Believe (University of Chicago Press, 2018). Used
with permission.

Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)

"Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night"
(1947)

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Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of
 day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is
 right,
Because their words had forked no light-
 ning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Whitman (cont.)

Life's ever-modern rapids first, (soon, soon
 to blend,
With the old streams of death.)

Some threading Ohio's farm-fields or the
 woods,
Some down Colorado's cañons from
 sources of perpetual snow,
Some half-hid in Oregon, or away south-
 ward in Texas,
Some in the north finding their way to Erie,
 Niagara, Ottawa,
Some to Atlantica's bays, and so to the
 great salt brine.

Thomas (cont.)

Good men, the last wave by, crying how
 bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a
 green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in
 flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its
 way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Whitman (cont.)

[In you whoe'er you are my book perusing,]
 In I myself, in all the world, these cur-
 rents flowing,
All, all toward the mystic ocean tending.

Currents for starting a continent new,

Overtures sent to the solid out of the liquid,
Fusion of ocean and land, tender and pensive waves,
(Not safe and peaceful only, waves rous'd
and ominous too,
Out of the depths the storm's abysmic
waves, who knows whence?
Raging over the vast, with many a broken
spar and tatter'd sail.)

Truth is like a lion (**St. Augustine**)

Truth isn't good enough (**Batman**)

[Truth] isn't truth (**Rudy Giuliani**)

No Truth-spot is forever (**Thomas Gieryn**)

Thomas (cont.)

Grave men, near death, who see with
blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be
gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad
height,
Curse, bless me now with your fierce tears,
I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Whitman (cont.)

Or from the sea of Time, collecting vasting
all, I bring,

A windrow-drift of weeds and shells.

O little shells, so curious-convolute, so limpid-cold and voiceless,
Will you not little shells to the tympan of
temples held,
Murmurs and echoes still call up, eternity's
music faint and far,
Wafted inland, sent from Atlantica's rim,
strains for the soul of the prairies,
Whisper'd reverberations, chords for the
ear of the West joyously sounding,
Your tidings old, yet ever new and untranslatable,
Infinitesimals out of my life, and many a life,
(For not my life and years alone I give—all,
all I give,)
These waifs from the deep, cast high and
dry,
Wash'd on America's shores?

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897) **Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68**

Instrumentation: 2 flutes (second doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings.
Premiere: November 4, 1876, Karlsruhe; Felix Otto Dessoff conducting.

QCSO Performance History: The QCSO waited over 25 years to first program Brahms' first symphony, but it has been frequently performed ever since, under the batons of Oscar Anderson (1941, 1948), Charles Gigante (1958), James Dixon (1968, 1975, 1984, 1990), Kim Allen Kluge (1995), Donald Schleicher (2004), and most recently, Mark Russell Smith (2011).

The fact that Johannes Brahms was to become a late hero of the German symphonic tradition was in no way obvious during the first decades of his career. Though his star was steadily rising with various chamber

works, even by his fortieth birthday he had not yet distinguished himself as a composer of orchestral music (Beethoven, by contrast, had completed his first eight symphonies by age 42). Brahms did enjoy successes with the choral-orchestral work *Ein Deutsche Requiem* and the near-symphonic *Variations on a Theme of Haydn*, both of which can now be considered precursors to his first symphony. He was said to have undertaken his first sketches for the work in 1855; “only” twenty-one years later, the work finally premiered.

There has been no small amount of speculation as to what caused this delay. Among the possibilities are his concern about his lack of training in orchestration, a fault he attributed to his otherwise-excellent teacher Eduard Marxsen. His long-unrealized ambition to become the conductor of the Hamburg Philharmonic meant he also lacked a close affiliation with an orchestra for which he could compose a large symphonic work. Finally, the most common theory about the delay of his symphonic career was that he found it difficult to compose a symphony in the shadow of Beethoven. Whether or not this was actually the case, the comparison with Beethoven was inevitable; Brahms’ First was rapidly labelled the “Tenth” by both conductor Hans von Bülow (who meant it admiringly) and Richard Wagner (who meant it as an insult).

Regardless of why it took him so long, completing the first symphony seems to have opened the symphonic floodgates for Brahms. He completed his second symphony almost immediately (premiered in 1877), which was followed by the violin concerto (1878). Brahms went on to write four

symphonies, all of which have remained at the core of the symphonic repertoire.

Brahms 1 Listening Guide

First movement: Un poco sostenuto — Allegro

♩ **HARMONY:** The beginning of Brahms’s slow introduction is built on a *pedal tone*, or long-held note in the bass over which various, sometimes conflicting harmonies can move. This opening, as one might expect, is built on the symphony’s *tonic* (or “home note”) of C. He also closes the slow introduction with another *pedal tone*, this time on the *dominant* (“note that points to home note”), which in this case is G. Both *pedal tones* are made extremely intense by the repeating notes on the timpani drums.

♩ **TEMPO:** As expected, the slow introduction gives way to the main, fast section of the first movement. But rather than rushing off with a furiously fast tempo, the main body of the first movement follows a rather moderate pulse. This is an approach Brahms often took: by not setting the pulse too fast, he can write widely contrasting rhythms, many of which are halting and grandiose, but others of which are driving and forceful.

♩ **RHYTHM:** Brahms also loved rhythmic “tricks”, and this movement has many. Although the pulse remains steady throughout, Brahms’s phrases are widely varying in length, and he often shifts emphasis off of the downbeat, giving the illusion of a change of meter. The best way to experience this is to notice how it is usually difficult to predict when and how Brahms is going to shift the rhythm or end a phrase.

Second movement: Andante sostenuto

♪ **HARMONY:** Why does the beginning of this movement feel like we've suddenly moved worlds away? One reason is that this movement is, compared to the first movement, in a *remote* key. Usually we expect the second movement of a symphony to be in a similar key to the first. With a first movement in C minor (three flats), we expect to stay with the same key signature (E-flat major), or at least move not too far away (i.e., two flats or four flats). But Brahms decides to set his second movement in the very far-away key of E major, with four sharps!

♪ **ORCHESTRATION:** Listen for the meandering solo in the oboe, handed off seamlessly to the clarinet. Listen also for the prominent solo violin in the second half of this movement.

Third movement: Un poco allegretto e grazioso

♪ **MELODY:** Listen to the clarinet melody that opens the movement. This tune is exclusively *stepwise*, meaning it moves only between notes immediately next to each other, without skipping or jumping. This gives the melody a smoothly connected, untroubled effect. Most of the melodies in this movement, especially in the outer sections, are predominantly stepwise.

♪ **FORM:** Third movements in symphonies are traditionally in *ternary* form, or ABA, and this movement is no exception. Listen for the contrasting middle section (its melodies have fewer steps), and then the return to the opening tune. Incidentally, the B section has a key-change similar to the drastic one described between the first and second movement, but Brahms is so sneaky in

how he moves to this key that it won't feel quite as remote.

Fourth movement: Adagio — Più andante — Allegro non troppo, ma con brio — Più allegro

♪ **MELODY:** Fans of this symphony know that there's a stirring, beautiful tune waiting on the other end of this somewhat unusual slow introduction. If you know this melody, listen for fragments of it throughout the slow passage. Once the tune arrives, however, don't say anything if it sounds to you like like Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*. Once when somebody made that observation to Brahms, he replied gruffly, "Every jack-ass notices that!"

♪ **TEMPO:** Like in the first movement, Brahms sets a relatively moderate tempo, dividing beat in many ways throughout the movement. When he wants more animation or excitement, he keeps the beat the same and simply divides it into shorter notes.