COMING EVENTS

SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 2017, 7:30 P.M.
ARIZONA STATESMEN AND WOMEN’S CHORUS
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, MESA
Bartlett R. Evans and Julie Neish, conductors
Tickets: $10 (students with ID, free)

THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 2017, 7:30 P.M.
MUSIC OF STRAVINSKY AND BARTÓK AND
FEATURING BEETHOVEN’S MASS IN C MAJOR
ASU GAMMAGE AUDITORIUM
Choral Union, Chamber Singers, Barrett Choir and
Symphony Orchestra
Jeffery Meyer David Schildkret, conductor
Free Admission

ASU SCHOOL OF MUSIC PRESENTS

Songs and Dances

ASU Chamber Singers

David Schildkret
and Eun-Mi Oh, conductors

First United Methodist Church, Mesa
Saturday, March 25, 2017
7:30 p.m.
PROGRAM

I.
The Turtle Dove
Margaret Vardell Sandresky (b. 1921)
Meet and Right It Is to Sing (Charles Wesley)
Alice Parker (b. 1925)
I Am Bound for the Promised Land
Promised Land
arr. Craig Courtney
Alex Fragiskatos, percussion

II.
Romancero gitano, op. 152
Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895 – 1968)
Baladilla de los tres ríos
Asleif Willmer, soprano
Jacqueline Black, mezzo-soprano
Michael Dawson Devery, tenor
Aaron Pendleton, baritone
La guitarra
Puñal
Procesión
Aaron Pendleton, baritone
Memento
Baile
Michael Dawson Devery, tenor
CodyRay Caho, baritone
Crótalo
Diego Alec Miranda, guitar

INTERMISSION

III.
Selections from Choral Dances from “Gloriana”
Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976)
Time
Concord
Time and Concord

IV.
Five Hebrew Love Songs (Hila Plitmann)
Eric Whitacre (b. 1970)
Temuna
Kala kalla
Larov
Eyze sheleg!
Nicole Blumentstein, speaker
Hannah Cummiskey, soprano
Rakut
Felix Herbst, violin
Nathan Arch, piano
Eun-Mi Oh, conductor

V.
Dance Set
Libby Larsen (b. 1950)
Two-Step and Drag
Her First Waltz
Polka
Jeremy Ruth, clarinet
Alex Duke, cello
Alex Fragiskatos, drums
Nathan Arch, piano

VI.
Around the Campfire
Hebrew Folksongs
arr. Joshua Jacobson
Finjan
Zemer Lach
Rad HaLailah
Jeremy Ruth and Patrick Englert, clarinet
Nathan Arch, piano
NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Tonight’s program features various works inspired by various dance forms and song styles. The central piece is Romance gitano by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. He was born in Italy and emigrated to the United States in 1939 to escape the anti-Semitic laws of the Fascists. Before his departure, he was among the most respected composers in Italy. He eventually established himself in Hollywood, working on some 250 films, though rarely for screen credit. His best known score for the movies was the 1945 film, And Then There Were None.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco was also a respected teacher of film scoring; among his pupils were Jerry Goldsmith, Henry Mancini, André Previn, Nelson Riddle, and John Williams. In addition to film music, Castelnuovo-Tedesco also wrote a considerable quantity of music for the guitar, solo music for solo voice, music for chorus, and orchestral music.

Byzantine chant, the effects of the Saracen invasion, the presence of Sephardic Jews, and the arrival of the gypsies on the Iberian Peninsula in the fifteenth century. The singing, improvisational, often—though not always—to the accompaniment of a guitar and dancing, became especially identified with the gypsies, hence Castelnuovo-Tedesco’s title for this work, La guitarra gitana.

Lorca, along with the Spanish composer Manuel de Falla, had an abiding interest in cante jondo, or Deep Song, a particular form of romancero dramatic and pensive, that dwelt on the suffering and death of Jesus (again, cante jondo centers on the Gita). This is beautifully demonstrated in the first poem of this movement, the singer sees the people in their penitential garb as fantastical creatures—unicorns, astronomers, sorcerers—and people from literature: Durandarte is a hero of Spanish chivalric fiction, and Orlando is the hero of a famous Renaissance epic. Next comes a statue of the Virgin. She is dressed in crinoline; the stiff, billowing skirts evoke for Lorca a cante jondo idea, which goes as easily into marketing the pilgrimage of the Entrada, which occurs quite a bit later in the fourth movement. The third brings us the statue of Christ himself (these are Pilate’s words when he presents Jesus to the people), Durandarte is a hero of Spanish chivalric fiction, and Orlando is the hero of a famous Renaissance epic.

La guitarra gitana is germane to the cante jondo, whose central themes are tragic love and sorrowful death. “No, don’t say the thought of agony to guitar and glass is germane to the cante jondo.” We do love to be out of our theater as we break the day and are inundated with the sound of music. Nothing can stop the sound of music. La guitarra gitana, cante jondo. A guitar sounds in the middle of the night, breaking the silence like sound breaks glass. Nothing can stop its sound; it’s useless even to try. It is like the sounds of nature, and yet the sound is pointless, lacking a future. Hence the images of an arrow without a target, an afternoon without a tomorrow, and even a dead bird perched upon a branch. The last of the poem depicts the guitar itself with its opening like a heart, pierced by the dead bird itself. Perhaps it is a riddle, the image of the guitar itself, which occurs quite a bit later in the fourth movement, combined with different poems, each evoking an image of the Easter vigil processions. Crowds of people move through the city streets more or less in silence (there might be the beating of a drum), following the clergymen and barges or floats carrying sacred effigies. The people are often dressed to express their repentance for their sins. They might wear the pointed hat of a criminal, or chains, or carry a heavy cross. Suddenly, from an open window, someone might shout, “Ecce homo.” The brutal imagery of the burning of Jesus, “No, don’t stab me!” The brutal imagery of the burning of Jesus, “Ecce homo.”

In the first poem of this movement, the singer sees the people in their penitential garb as fantastical creatures—unicorns, astronomers, sorcerers—and people from literature:

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Memento, set as a tango (which is Argentinean, not gypsy, but it’s wonderful anyway), is a little epigram. The singer wishes to be buried with his guitar, then among the orange trees and mint, and finally above everything, in a weather vane. Thus the singer moves progressively from under the earth to a vantage point high above it. The weather vane, turning in every direction, is a potent symbol of vision and change, but also of fickleness and powerlessness. Through its restless, groundless movement, it reflects Lorca’s own sense of exile and homelessness.

Carmen in the next song is a personification of the cante jondo itself: though she is a white-haired, aged woman, she is still seductive. As she dances through the streets of Seville, her influence is so primal that young women must be shielded from it: “Girls, close the curtains.” Yet, though everyone hides from the emotion of the cante jondo, it still has the power to stir Andalusian hearts.

The last song is an evocation of the castanets. The word crótalo is a pun: it can refer both to the castanets and to a rattlesnake. This poem also shows Whitacre’s talent for the small but vivid image as he compares the hand wrapped around the castanets to a spider.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco takes the poems at face value, using archetypal musical gestures to create a fantasy of Spain that seems at once remote and familiar. The elegant guitar accompaniment contributes to the exotic atmosphere of the work. As with the poems, we are hearing not a recreation of the cante jondo, but an artistic response to it in a musical dialect that we associate with Spain.

The second half opens with three works based on 18th- and 19th-century hymns. “Turtle Dove” is Margaret Sandresky’s adaptation of a Southern Harmony tune; “Meet and Right It Is to Sing” is Alice Parker’s setting of a Charles Wesley hymn. Her original melody is evocative of old American hymns but with irregular meters that give it a modernist cast. “I Am Bound for the Promised Land” by Craig Courtney is an arrangement of an American hymn. Courtney composed it in honor of the 100th anniversary of the founding of Acadia National Park in Maine on a commission from the Mount Desert Summer Chorale. David Schildkret conducted the premiere as part of the park’s centennial celebration in August 2016.

The program opens with three selections from a masque composed in honor of the crowning of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. It connects her with her namesake, Elizabeth I, who was known by the poetic nickname of Gloriana. The poetry captures the hopefulness that surrounded the crowning of the young queen in the midst of the privations following World War II.

Five Hebrew Love Songs were originally a set of songs for solo soprano. Whitacre adapted it for choir in 2002, and it exists in a variety of versions. The touching poetry captures the budding relationship between the composer and his future wife. The last song is a set of campfire songs from Israel as arranged by the noted scholar of Jewish folk music, Joshua Jacobson.