JAMES WATROUS GALLERY

wisconsin academy of sciences, arts and letters

WISCONSIN'S PEOPLE ON THE LAND CONCERT

Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society Chamber Ensemble Concert
featuring the premiere of *The Wick of the Land,* written by Michael Bell and
inspired by the artwork in the exhibition *Wisconsin's People On The Land.*

Jim Funmaker with Gourds (detail), 2002,
silver gelatin print, Tom Jones

Thistles (detail), 2001, oil on linen, David Lenz

Angela, Randy, Corey and Rosalie Geiger (Ran–Rose Farms), Reedsville, Wisconsin (NE to SE to SW), 2006
Inkjet pigment print, J. Shimon & J. Lindemann

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WISCONSIN'S
PEOPLE ON THE LAND CONCERT

AN EVENING OF CLASSICAL RURAL MUSIC

WITH THE BACH DANCING & DYNAMITE SOCIETY

Stephanie Jutt, flute, Suzanne Beia, violin
Parry Karp, cello, Jeffrey Sykes, piano

PROGRAM

***Violin Sonata in A minor,* Op. 105** (1851)
Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Suzanne Beia, *violin*
Jeffrey Sykes, *piano*

Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck
Allegretto
Lebhaft

The Wick of the Land (2007)
Michael Mayerfeld Bell (b. 1957)

Ensemble

Kindling
Dwindling
Rekindling

INTERMISSION

Duo for Flute and Piano (1971)
Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Stephanie Jutt, *flute*
Jeffrey Sykes, *piano*

Flowing
Poetic, somewhat mournful
Lively, with bounce

***Cello Sonata in E minor,* Op. 38** (1862)
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Parry Karp, *cello*
Jeffrey Sykes, *piano*

Allegro non troppo
Allegretto quasi menuetto
Allegro

PROGRAM NOTES

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to be connected to the land? What place is there for rural place in our increasingly urban lives? This concert explores two centuries of musical responses to these questions.

For the Romantics, questions of place, nature, land, and the rural were central to their sense of the human condition. As the engines of industry and modernity spun ever faster, whirring and clanging along, artists throughout the 19th Century pondered what we were losing, and perhaps never fully had. Instead of the dehumanizing precision, consistency, and categorical certainties of the machine, cold to human feeling, the Romantics sought release into the intensity of emotional experience and the constant creativity of the infinite. They found this creative release primarily in their imaginations of nature and country life, and of the inalienable authenticities of place. Composers from Beethoven to Brahms found deep inspiration in rural walks and extended stays in the countryside. And even composers who stayed more in town, like Schumann, relished the place-based music and myth of rural folk, often drawing on regional folk traditions to develop national musics. Or they took the invitation of rural release and freedom in more abstract ways—into the pure creativity of what many Romantics called "absolute music," free of the confines of a "program" such as Beethoven used for his inspiration in the *Pastoral Symphony.*

By the early 20th Century, these concerns had largely passed, however, as artists embraced the modern and found their sense of the infinite in modernity's universal truths of science and technology. Creativity now came not from escaping the urban and its categorical life but from new technologies for creating and controlling categories. In music, this trend resonated most strongly in the use of serial formulas for composition, advanced with no regard for their tonal implications, and in ever more detailed instructions to performers: what is sometimes called "totally organized music." There were always dissenters to this hard-edged and metallic sound, though, such as Rachmaninoff, who never turned from the ideas of the Romantics, and Copland who often found himself returning to them.

Today the direction of composition is uncertain. Excitement wanes for constantly violating musical expectations through asserting new categories, or a total lack of categories, for their own sake. But there are troubles in the Romantic conception too, such as the problem of how to prevent the authenticity of place and nature from becoming chauvinism, closing people in rather than inviting people in.

These are difficult questions, and for difficult questions there are no easy answers. But perhaps the music in this concert can help us in our collective consideration. For, as the composer Modest Mussorgsky once put it, "art is a means of conversing."

SCHUMANN, ***Violin Sonata in A minor***

This *Sonata* is the product of the closing years of a composer's *oeuvre,* a mature and assured work. Schumann does not call directly to the values of rurality and nature here, or of folk life, as he did most consistently in his many songs. This is absolute music, a Romantic composer celebrating individual creativity and striving for the intensity of the infinite. Here Schumann considers the infinite in a melancholy light, dwelling most on the minor keyed sounds the Romantics particularly liked. Schumann shows his respect for Baroque traditions in this piece, developing his themes into canons in the 1st and 3rd movements. Also listen for the return of some the material from the 1st movement, in a new guise, in the 3rd.

BELL, ***The Wick of the Land***

At the end, see the separate program notes for this piece.

COPLAND, ***Duo for Flute and Piano***

We continue with one of Copland's last pieces. Although finished in 1971, the *Duo* is based on sketches from the 1940s which Copland made during the peak of his efforts to define an American style of composition. For the roots of that national style, Copland did as the Romantics had before him: He turned to the sounds of rural place and folk. This period produced his best known works, including the ballets *Billy the Kid, Rodeo,* and *Appalachian Spring,* and the opera *The Tender Land,* all drawing on rural themes. From there, his work shifted to the more modernist statements of serialism. But at the end of his career, he returned to the tonality and lyricism of his American period, as in this lovely duo.

BRAHMS, ***Cello Sonata in E minor***

One of Brahms' favorite lines from Goethe, perhaps the preeminent Romantic philosopher, was "We are only originals because we know nothing." This almost Taoist sentiment reflected the Romantic embrace of the undefinabilities of the infinite, the freedom to create anew, and the heroic grandeur of originality. Such an open interpretation of the Romantic impulse perhaps underlies Brahms' rejection of programmatic music, although he was well-known for retaining the restraints of many Baroque and Classical elements in his music, and for his love of folk music. He was also a perfectionist, a characteristic well-exemplified by the serene and refined construction of this *Sonata* and the fact that Brahms removed one of its original movements, an *adagio* now lost, just before publishing it. Brahms' admiration of tradition is evident in what he did allow to be published. Listen for the Baroque ornaments in the 2nd movement and the extensive use of fugue in the 3rd. Both the 1st and 3rd movements also use themes closely drawn from Bach.

***The Wick of the Land*—**COMPOSER'S PROGRAM NOTES

Whither the rural? Or should we now ask wither the rural? Either way, it is a vital question to put to our collective rural genius, challenging it to contend with the demand for sustainability of the rural and of the genius itself. I put that double question here, interrogating through music the rural spirit of sustainability and the sustainability of the rural spirit.

It is a double question of wick, a word with many doubles of its own, doubles we often neglect.

There is, of course, wick in the most directly visual sense for us today, as in the wick of a candle. It seems apt to me to consider this visual wick as a metaphor for the sustainability of the land. Sustainability is a relationship that we must keep burning, a candle wick alight in the darkness of the universe. But we must do so without consuming the source of the flame—a double task that we must learn to not make a contradiction.

Although we generally do not recall it, wick also means the aliveness of spirit. This understanding of wick comes down to us today most commonly with negative significance, as in wicked and witch, a sense that there is something to be feared in the aliveness of spirit. We have mostly forgotten that the wick is the quick, although Dickon tried to remind Mary, and us, of this when he told her that *The Secret Garden* had become "as wick as you or me." Wick, then, is ghost not given up. Surely this is a meaning we should not fear. And perhaps we vaguely acknowledge the centrality of ghosts to aliveness when we admire the dancing flames of a candle's wick, the live spirit of the candle which constitutes the warming vitality of its light.

To sustain the live spirit of the rural candle is also to sustain another largely forgotten meaning of wick: wick as home and habitation, as abode and dwelling place. We still hear this connotation in the place names of some towns and cities in England, or in place names derived from England, such as Norwich, Wickham, Hampton Wick, and just plain Wick. And I hear in it a cognate to the Greek *oikos*, meaning home, and from which we gain today the word ecology, the study of home.

So by the name *The Wick of the Land* for this piece, I intone many meanings: wick as sustainability, wick as spirit, and wick as an understanding of both of these together—that is, as the sustaining hearth of place and spirit, our ecological home.

I gathered these thoughts in response to the art exhibition *Wisconsin's People on the Land*, on view in the James Watrous Gallery at the Overture Center for the Arts, in Madison, Wisconsin, in April and May of 2007. That show itself gathered in response to a statewide discussion on *The Future of Farming and Rural Life in*

Wisconsin, convened by the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters. The work of the artists in the show—David Lenz, Tom Jones, and John Shimon and Julie Lindemann—seemed to me to give shape and profile to three broad takes on the rural: The idyll of the rural as it was and as we hoped it would still be. The counter-idyll of the loss of that rural, both as it was and as we perhaps now fear it never was. The reconstructed idyll of rural openness, intentionality, and renewal, ever redefining itself and us. The first two takes are finalizations of the rural, the one positive and the other negative, while the third represents a determined embrace of the undetermined and the unfinalizable.

I give resonance to these three rural themes through a movement exploring each. In the first movement, *Kindling,* I describe an ideal rural past of harmony between people and the land, and between rural peoples themselves. I begin by echoing a Native American water drum, joyful and inviting, and then introduce three themes based on the musical ideas of the moccasin game, a gambling game traditionally accompanied by drumming and singing and once widely popular among Native peoples, including the Ho-Chunk and Iroquois tribes of Wisconsin. These three themes then morph into a recounting of the European settlement of the Wisconsin landscape, first by gravitating into a jig, a dance popular with the Voyageurs and with the Irish, and then finally into a waltz, a dance popular with Wisconsin's German and Scandinavian settlers. Aside from a contestation here and there, the music represents the parts of the rural past as largely in tune one with the other.

The second movement, *Dwindling,* recounts the story of rural loss much in evidence in the exhibition and in much rural talk today. Here the music sings a sad, almost funereal hymn several times over. Interspersed between these singings, we hear a dialogue of laments between sounds I derive from Norwegian hardanger fiddle, with its double stops and drones, and sounds I derive from a Ho-Chunk love lament for flute. My inspiration here comes from the playing of Wisconsin folk musicians—Otto Rindlisbacher on hardanger fiddle and John Bear Skin on Ho-Chunk flute—recorded by University of Wisconsin faculty member Helene Stratman-Thomas in the 1940s, and now preserved (and on-line) in the University of Wisconsin's *Wisconsin Folksong Collection.* (My inspiration for the first movement comes in part from the moccasin game tunes played and sung by the Ho-Chunk chief Albert Yellow Thunder, also recorded by Helene Stratman-Thomas, and from the jigs and waltzes she recorded.) The movement ends quietly, dying away.

The third movement, *Rekindling,* begins with questioning music, and then yields to the optimism of a new water drum rhythm that sets the pace for a vigorous theme with a contemporary harmonic sound, although not without roots in folk idioms (in this case eastern European). This theme sets the frame for the possibility of new rural conversations and a plural, unfinalized sense of what the rural can be and can sustain. There can be no full representation of that plural sense of the

rural and its reconstruction, and from the possibilities already in evidence in rural Wisconsin, without giving musical presence to the Hmong. In dialogue with the contemporary theme, I offer what I hope is an uplifting theme that reverberates with the musical sensibilities of a Hmong New Year's melody, Qeej Kawm Ntawv. But this present future of the rural should be in dialogue with the rural past and our ideals for it. So I develop my version of a Hmong New Year's song into a double canon with one of the moccasin game melodies of the first movement (a melody that is also heard in the jig and as a counterpoint to the waltz in the first movement). The movement, and the piece, ends with a final singing of this tune for a rural new year.

Through all these kindlings, though, runs a single thought and hope: that we can and may discover a way to keep the candle of rural life always alight.

—Michael Mayerfeld Bell

BIOGRAPHY

BACH DANCING & DYNAMITE SOCIETY

Chamber music with a bang. More bang for your Bach. What Bach would be doing if he were more fun and less dead. However you describe what they do, Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society always features great music played with joy, creativity, spontaneity, and with a technique that's second to none.

SUZANNE BEIA

Violinist Suzanne Beia, a native of Reno, Nevada, began her musical studies on viola at the age of ten. Three years later she shifted her attention to the violin and made her solo debut at age fourteen with the North Lake Tahoe Symphony. She has appeared frequently as soloist with orchestras throughout the U.S. Before coming to Madison to join the Pro Arte Quartet as second violin, she held the position of principal second violin in the Wichita Symphony and has held concertmaster positions in the Reno Philharmonic, the Reno Chamber Orchestra, the Bay Area Women's Philharmonic, and the Spoleto Festival Orchestra. Her

chamber music experience has been extensive; she performed for seven years in the Verano Trio and more recently for two years with the Wichita-based Sedgwick String Quartet. She has been invited to perform in such festivals as Chamber Music West, the Telluride Chamber Music Festival, and the Festival de Prades, and has served on the faculties of the Rocky Ridge Music Center and Florida International University. In addition to her duties with the Pro Arte Quartet, Ms. Beia performs with the Madison Symphony Orchestra and is concertmaster of the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra.

STEPHANIE JUTT

Flutist Stephanie Jutt's elegant artistry and passionate intellect have inspired musicians and audiences around the world. Her groundbreaking performances of new music, transcriptions, and traditional repertoire have made her a model for adventurous flutists everywhere. Ms. Jutt's recent all-Brahms recording with pianist Jeffrey Sykes, *Stolen Moments,* was released in January 2005 on Centaur. New Brahms transcriptions by Ms. Jutt were recently published by International Music Publishing. A graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music, her teachers were James Pappoutsakis, Paula Robison, and Marcel Moyse. Ms. Jutt won the Concert Artist Guild and Pro Musicis International Soloist awards and has performed in recital throughout the U.S., Europe, and Asia. A dedicated teacher, Ms. Jutt is on the faculty of the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She co-produces the Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society summer music festival for three weeks with Jeffrey Sykes in Madison. She has served as a board member and program chair for the National Flute Association.

PARRY KARP

Cellist Parry Karp is artist-in-residence and professor of chamber music and cello at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he is director of the string chamber music program. He has been cellist of the Pro Arte Quartet for the past 30 years. Mr. Karp is an active solo artist, performing numerous recitals annually in the U.S., and he has recorded six solo CDs. He is active as a performer of new music, participating in the premieres of dozens of works, many of which were written for him, including concerti, sonatas, and chamber music. Unearthing and performing unjustly neglected repertoire for cello is a passion of Mr. Karp's. In recent years he has transcribed for cello many masterpieces written for other instruments. This project has included performances of all of the Duo Sonatas of Brahms. With the Pro Arte Quartet he has performed more than 1,000 concerts throughout the Americas, Europe, and Japan. His discography with the group includes more than two dozen recordings, among them the complete string quartets of Ernest Bloch, Miklos Rosza, and Karol Szymanowski. Many of these recordings received awards from *Fanfare* and *High Fidelity* magazines. Former students of Mr. Karp's are now teachers and members of professional string quartets and major orchestras throughout North America.

JEFFREY SYKES

Acclaimed by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* as "a commanding solo player, the most supportive of accompanists, and a leader in chamber music," pianist Jeffrey Sykes has performed throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and Western Europe. The *San Francisco Examiner* praised his recent appearance with the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players as "a tour-de-force performance [that was] the evening's major delight." He made his Carnegie Hall debut with oboist Gerard Reuter and flutist Stephanie Jutt under the auspices of the Pro Musicis Foundation. A founder and artistic director of BDDS, Dr. Sykes also serves as the music director of Opera for the Young, a professional opera company that gives more than 260 performances a year to schoolchildren in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois. In addition, he is the assistant director of Music in the Vineyards of Napa, California. Dr. Sykes holds degrees with honors from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Franz Schubert Institut in Baden-bei-Wien, Austria, and the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he received his doctorate. He has garnered numerous awards, including the Jacob Javits Fellowship from the U.S. Department of Education and a Fulbright grant to study at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. He resides in San Francisco.

MICHAEL MAYERFELD BELL

How to describe the sound of composer Michael Mayerfeld Bell? Not "modern," certainly. He is too fond of tunes for that. Not "postmodern," either. He does not direct his music toward the erasure of boundaries and categories. Rather, he describes his musical purpose as the delight of engagement—that is, communication that renews the cultural conversation. Call it the sensibilities of the folk musician, which is where he began his musical life, singing and playing in a family band with his father, two brothers, and a cousin. Or call it what he prefers to term it: *dialogic* music—music that is in conversation with performers and audiences about our pasts, presents, and futures. Michael is also Professor in the Department of Rural Sociology and the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, as well as Chair of the Agroecology Program and Co-Director of the Program on Agricultural Technology Studies in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

JAMES WATROUS GALLERY

wisconsin academy of sciences, arts and letters

Overture Center for the Arts, top floor

WISCONSIN'S PEOPLE ON THE LAND

DAVID LENZ, TOM JONES, J. SHIMON & J. LINDEMANN

APRIL 3-MAY 20

A group exhibition that examines the changing rural landscape of Wisconsin as seen through the eyes of four Wisconsin artists: Milwaukee painter David Lenz, Madison photographer Tom Jones and Manitowoc photographers J. Shimon & J. Lindemann. The exhibition is part of the Wisconsin Academy's multi-year initiative, *The Future of Farming and Rural Life in Wisconsin*. This evening's concert precedes the start of the *Future of Farming and Rural Life* conference held at Monona Terrace May 14 and 15.

GALLERY HOURS
DURING CONFERENCE

SUNDAY, May 13th
1pm – 8 pm

MONDAY, May 14th
5pm – 7 pm

TUESDAY, May 15th
11am – 5 pm

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