

Anthony de Mare & Steven Mayer

Thursday, July 17, 2008 7:30 pm

Portland International Piano Festival
Miller Hall, World Forestry Center

Program: "Jammin' Tigers"

**DUKE ELLINGTON/
BILLY STRAYHORN**

Tonk

ANTHONY DE MARE & STEVEN MAYER

**LOUIS MOREAU GOTTSCHALK
JELLY ROLL MORTON
FATS WALLER
JAMES P. JOHNSON**

The Banjo
Frances
'Tain't Nobody's Bizness If I Do
Blueberry Rhyme

STEVEN MAYER

GEORGE ANTHEIL

Second Sonata ("The Airplane")

Jazz Sonata (Sonata No. 4)

**ARNOLD SCHOENBERG
FREDERIC RZEWSKI
CONLON NANCARROW**

Klavierstücke, Op. 33a
Dreadful Memories
Sonatina

ANTHONY DE MARE

ART TATUM

Solos (1933-40)

STEVEN MAYER

Intermission

FREDERIC RZEWSKI

Piano Pieces Nos. 3 & 4

ANTHONY DE MARE

FILM EXCERPTS

Tiny's Exercise (*Art Tatum*)

The Fabulous Dorsey Brothers (*Art Tatum appearance*)

**ART TATUM
LEONARD BERNSTEIN**

Humoresque
Masque, from *The Age of Anxiety*

STEVEN MAYER

FREDERIC RZEWSKI

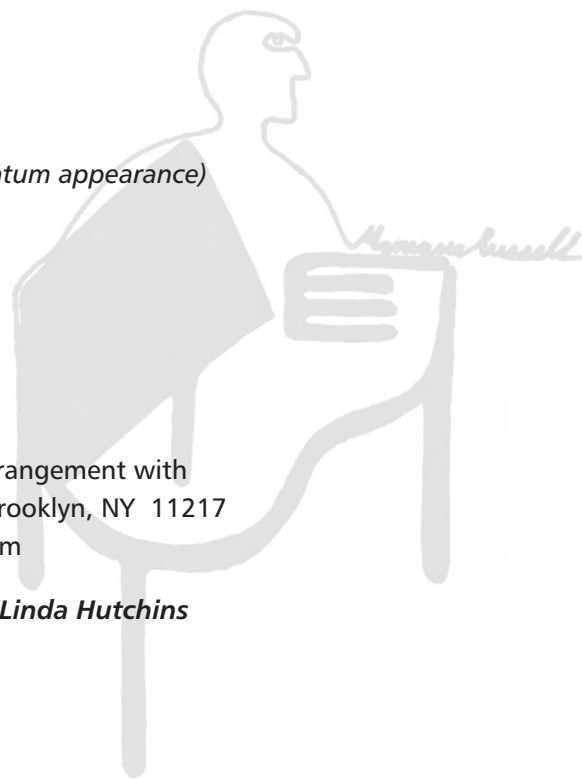
Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues

ANTHONY DE MARE

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Program subject to change



Program Notes

Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn

Tonk (1945)

"Tonk," played here by Anthony de Mare and Steven Mayer, was originally played by the two composers, Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. Strayhorn, Ellington's alter ego, played alternate piano in a piece based on a rolling, rollicking bass line and a "cool" theme above. Occasional and increasing fireworks appear in the upper registers. Harmonies are post-impressionistic.

Louis Moreau Gottschalk

The Banjo (1855)

"The Banjo" is an original American piano etude. Composed a few years before the Civil War, its brilliant effects combine with "De Camptown Races," by Stephen Foster, for a good time.

Jelly Roll Morton

Frances (1929)

"Frances" is one of Jelly Roll's typical, complex solos. Subtle development of themes and several sections highlight a syncopated composition.

Fats Waller

'Tain't Nobody's Bizness If I Do (1929)

"'Tain't Nobody's Bizness If I Do" is one of Fats's typical stride solos. The left hand alternates between low and middle registers; variations on the theme are melodic as well as rhythmic.

James P. Johnson

Blueberry Rhyme (1930)

"Blueberry Rhyme" is a lyric solo by Fats Waller's teacher, James P. Johnson, known as the father of stride. Classical-like harmonic shifts highlight a lovely piece.

— Program notes by Steven Mayer

George Antheil

Second Sonata ("The Airplane") (1922)

Jazz Sonata (Sonata No. 4) (1923)

George Antheil is one of those figures whose persona and career are sources of endless fascination and speculation for artists, despite the

fact that his musical output is relatively unknown. Both ahead of, and yet of, his time, Antheil has attracted the interest of performers, composers, writers, visual artists, and filmmakers since the self-proclaimed "bad boy of music" burst upon the scene in Paris, in 1926, with his notorious *Ballet Mécanique*. His revolutionary work interested composers as important as Stravinsky, Ravel, and Hindemith, attracted collaborators as influential as Man Ray and Fernand Leger, and made friends and colleagues of the intelligentsia of New York, Hollywood, and expatriate Paris, including Copland, Joyce, Pound, Satie, Yeats, and Picasso.

The Trenton-born Antheil made his mark in Paris with music that embraced the machine age and the modern world by integrating the artifacts of industry and invention into his music. A self-styled revolutionary, his early works, such as the signature Second Sonata ("The Airplane"), the Jazz Sonata (Sonata No. 4), *Mechanisms*, *Sonatina (Death of the Machines)*, and *Sonata Sauvage* — with their percussive, boisterous, and rhythmically propulsive qualities — shocked audiences and inspired composers with their new sound and conception. Much of the material in these works is derived from musical sketches extracted from his memory, weeks after having had a disturbing dream of the future.

In "The Airplane," he juxtaposes contrasting motivic ideas, and repeats whole or fragmented materials, while using his signature strident harmonies and violent rhythms, some of which clearly suggest a connection to ragtime. Regarding the title, the composer states, "I called it that because, as a symbol, the airplane seemed most indicative of that future into which I wanted to escape." The short, one-movement, enigmatic Jazz Sonata was actually premiered in Berlin, in 1923, before he landed in Paris. More recently, the pianist Marc-André Hamelin has referred to this curious work as the "perfect musical crime"!

— Program notes by
Anthony de Mare/Barbara Eliason

Arnold Schoenberg

Klavierstücke, Op. 33a (1928)

With his penultimate solo piano piece, Schoenberg compellingly constructs a vibrant sonata-allegro movement in which the active twelve-tone row materials are generated in a variety of thematic styles. From a different perspective, it is said that he also conceived the piece, to some extent, to be akin to cocktail music.

Frederic Rzewski

Dreadful Memories (1979)

(See notes below)

Conlon Nancarrow

Sonatina (ca. 1941)

Among the important American iconoclasts was Conlon Nancarrow (1912–97), who dabbled in jazz and classical trumpet, and had lessons with Roger Sessions and Walter Piston, before joining the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and fighting in Spain. He eventually settled in Mexico and isolated himself from compositional influences. In Henry Cowell's *New Musical Resources*, he read about complex rhythms only a mechanical piano could reproduce. He bought such a piano and the machinery to make music for it. His influential *Player Piano Studies* are the invention of a precisionist driven to devise rhythms of maximum complexity. Nancarrow also produced a small body of work for human performers, including his *Sonatina* – one of ten surviving Nancarrow compositions predating his purchase of the player piano in 1947. According to the composer and music historian Kyle Gann, the *Sonatina* might be regarded as Nancarrow's first mature composition. Gann also writes:

"The work is a catalogue-in-miniature of the rhythmic concerns that will become more prominent in the fifty-plus *Studies* for player piano. In the first movement, points of canonic imitation are frequent.... The exquisitely crafted second movement is one of the blues forms so common in Nancarrow's early music. Its crashing 5-against-2 rhythms are followed by a theme in 6/8 meter, marked by the most luscious jazz chords of his

entire output. The theme's second half inverts its first half, and an "ff" interlude features some fist clusters (whose use Nancarrow would have recently read about in Cowell's *New Musical Resources*). Nancarrow wrings unexpected sonorities by superimposing the theme over its inversion, in his own idiosyncratic fusion of Bartókian contrapuntal techniques and jazz harmony. The third movement opens with a perpetual-motion canon reminiscent of Roy Harris, and the following alternations between eighth-note and dotted-eighth-note beats hint again at the tempo clashes of the *Player Piano Studies*. The theme's primary motive, C-A-G, and its retrograde, saturate the movement to the point that one begins to hear canon everywhere.... Nancarrow had generally preferred performance via piano roll, though he was pleased with the four-hand (one piano) version made by Yvar Mikhashoff. Anthony de Mare is one of the few pianists to have mastered the solo version to Nancarrow's satisfaction."

— Program notes by Joseph Horowitz

Art Tatum

Solos (1933–40)

"Steven Mayer has transcribed by ear, note for note, numerous Tatum improvisations and recorded them (on Naxos)...adding his own touches to Tatum's solos....Tatum took the Harlem stride style of Fats Waller and reinvented it, pushing it harmonically, polyphonically, and pianistically beyond anything imagined...his improvisations always sounded fresh." (Anthony Tommasini, *New York Times*, July 2006)

Frederic Rzewski

Piano Pieces Nos. 3 & 4 (1977)

Christian Wolff has stated that Rzewski's *Four Pieces* "continue the tradition he identifies as humanist realism — the fusion of elements of European art music with North and South American folk music. The pieces are parts of a whole of continuum."

The work is structured loosely in the form of a sonata with a single theme that keeps returning in different forms and moods, vaguely reminiscent of traditional music of the Andes, but without actually quoting anything. Other stylistic elements also appear, and in Piano Piece No. 3 one hears the Schoenbergian atonality of the Opus 11 period as well as a Shostakovich-like melody.

Piano Piece No. 4 is built on repeated notes that form repeated chords. As the composer states: "The notes should be stroked rather than struck, as if one were exciting a large gong: the object being to allow the instrument to speak throughout its entire spectrum. The final notes should not have the character of a cadence, but rather the contrary, of something unfinished; it should not be clear whether another sound is coming, until all sound has, in fact, died away — a suggestion that the story is not over." The music as a whole in all four pieces, though, remains firmly attached to the west coast of South America — a meditation on Chile four years after the coup d'état.

— Program notes by
Frederic Rzewski and Anthony de Mare

Art Tatum

Humoresque (1949)

"Humoresque" exists in many versions. Tatum's is humorous, sassy, bluesy.

Leonard Bernstein

Masque, from *The Age of Anxiety* (1949)

The "Masque," from Bernstein's *Age of Anxiety*, is a depiction of several New Yorkers "on the town" in the 1940s, when jazz was "cool" and classical musicians were infatuated with, and in awe of it.

— Program notes by Steven Mayer

Frederic Rzewski

Dreadful Memories (1979)

Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues (1979)

In writing the *Four North American Ballads*, I took as a model the Chorale Preludes of Bach, who in his contrapuntal writing consistently derives motive configurations from the basic tune. In each piece, I built up contrapuntal textures in a similar way, using classical techniques like augmentation, diminution, transposition, and compression; always keeping the profile of the tune on the same level.

The melodies used are folksongs which all bear some relation to the American labor movement. The first in the set, "Dreadful Memories," is an old religious hymn which became a labor-song in the version by Aunt Molly Jackson about a bitter strike in 1932 in the coal mines of Kentucky.

"Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues," the fourth in the set, is an industrial blues piece from North Carolina, where nonunion workers are, still today, making jeans in conditions similar to those described here. The song [quoted below but never sung by the pianist] is of unknown authorship, but dates from some time in the 1930s.

— Program notes by Frederic Rzewski

Old man Sargent, sitting at his desk,
the damned old fool won't give us a rest,
he'd take the nickels off a dead man's eyes
to buy Coca-Cola and Eskimo pies.
I got the blues, I got the blues,
I got the Winnsboro cotton mill blues.
Lordy, Lordy, spoolin's hard;
you know and I know, I don't have to tell,
you work for Tom Watson, got to work like hell.

When I die, don't bury me at all,
just hang me up on the spool-room wall;
place a knotter in my hand,
so I can spool in the Promised Land.
I got the blues, I got the blues,
I got the Winnsboro cotton mill blues.