

May 2nd, 2023, Pollack Hall

Benjamin Diamond

Class of Steven Cowan

Program Notes

These program notes are written by the student performing, and are presented by the student in partial fulfillment of the requirements of their course. Ces notes de programme sont écrites par l'étudiant-interprète et sont présentées en tant que réalisation partielle des critères de leur cours.

Sonata Terra

Murphy, Stephen (b. 1982).

From Baie Verte, Newfoundland, Stephen Murphy is an emerging composer and pedagogue specializing in writing guitar works for a variety of skill levels and audiences. His passion for community engagement in his home province has led him to co-found the Atlantic Guitar Society and direct the Long and McQuade classical guitar camp in St. John's. He holds a Bachelor of Music in performance from Acadia University where he studied with Eugene Cormier, and is currently finishing his Masters in performance and pedagogy under the tutelage of Sylvie Proulx at Memorial University. Throughout his graduate studies, he has created numerous new arrangements and compositions, including *Sonata Terra*, written for Ben Diamond

This 3-movement neo-impressionist Sonata is a homage to nature in Newfoundland and Labrador. Both Diamond and Murphy share a deep passion for their home province, strengthening the vision for their collaboration. The first movement, inspired by the forests, demonstrates contrasting tempos and characters, and is composed with many repetitions to challenge the performers' creativity as an interpreter. The second movement, depicting the ocean, utilizes the G Phrygian mode with slow tempi to create a melancholic and emotional tribute to the rugged and relentless sea surrounding the island. The third movement pays homage to the province's intense winters in a fast and dramatic finale.

In the Woods

Takemitsu, Tōru (1930-1996).

Through his passion for creating new timbres and writing captivating music, Tōru Takemitsu has established himself as a household name in contemporary music around the globe. The Japanese composer and author has a prolific output spanning over several hundred musical works, ninety film scores, and twenty published books. He was a largely self-taught musician and was born in Tokyo, Japan, on October 8, 1930. His early years of education were impacted by military conscription during World War II, where he first began listening to western classical music in secret along with his fellow servicemen. The music of Takemitsu caught the attention of many prolific composers such as Igor Stravinsky and Aaron Copland, which helped propel his career internationally. Takemitsu was also greatly influenced by the music of Olivier Messiaen and

Claude Debussy, and he worked with musicians such as John Cage, Iannis Xenakis, and Karlheinz Stockhausen. His long-lasting career was filled with learning and inspiration, which gave him the passion to continue writing even on his deathbed: *In the Woods*, written in 1995, was finished just three months before his passing in February 1996.

In the Woods is comprised of three movements – Wainscot Pond (after a painting of Cornelia Foss), Rosedale, and Muir Woods. The first movement, dedicated to John Williams, is presented in an arch-like form and develops on a repeated 6-note motive throughout. Takemitsu uses moving parallel chords, octatonic scales, and harmonics in tandem with ordinary pitches in small intervals. This creates resonant and intimate musical moments, setting up important thematic material for the remainder of the suite. The second movement, Rosedale, was inspired by the Rosedale woods in Toronto, Canada, and was written for the Japanese guitarist Kiyoshi Shamura. It was in October 1996 that Shamura later premiered the work in its entirety with all 3 movements. Ending the suite is the third movement, Muir Woods, written for Julian Bream. Muir Woods is the name of a national monument in Mill Valley California and was premiered by Bream in London England. Bream describes the final movement in a quote that can be evenly distributed to the suite in its entirety; “The music has an undeniable valedictory quality. It is highly distilled and the texture characteristically refined. It is also music of extraordinary stillness, music that dissolves gently into silence.”

Something Sawed

Blackmore, Luke (b. 1999).

Born in St. John’s, Newfoundland, Luke Blackmore is a composer, sound artist, and performer based in Toronto, where he is currently pursuing graduate studies in composition at the University of Toronto under the tutelage of Kotoka Suzuki and Eliot Britton. He holds a B. Mus (Honors) degree in composition from Memorial University, where he studied with Andrew Staniland and Clark Ross. Blackmore has worked with performers such as Ryan Scott (percussion), Naomi McCarroll-Butler (saxophone), Jing Xia (guzheng), Jack Campbell (violin), Anna Graham (bassoon), among others. He is currently also the composer in residence with the UofT guitar ensemble. Other collaborations of his include the Canadian Music Centre’s ACTIVATE program, the Toronto Strings Composition Workshop, the Newfound Festival, and Sound Symposium festival. It was at the Sound Symposium XX in 2022 where *Something Sawed* was commissioned and premiered by Ben Diamond.

Something Sawed is a new work for guitar and electronics that was funded by the ArtsNL professional project grant program in 2022. The work was premiered in July 2022 as part of Ben’s concert program highlighting rhythm and percussion. *Something Sawed* also adds to Ben’s growing initiative to focus on music for guitar and electronics by Canadian composers. Blackmore details that *Something Sawed* is a direct translation from the Greek work *Prisma*, deriving from the English word prism. Just as a prism turns light into an infinite spectrum of color, *Something Sawed* explores the range of possibilities presented by the guitar. In this way,

both the piece and the prism take something known and extract unknown complexity – previously imperceptible – from within.

24 Preludios (extraits)

Ponce, Manuel María (1882-1948).

Composer, educator, and scholar Manuel María Ponce can be defined as one of the most prolific musicians of the 20th century to come from Mexico. He was born in Fresnillo, Zacatecas, in the central region of Mexico, where he was raised in a musical family. At the age of four, Ponce heard his sister Josefina play a piano piece, and he was able to play it back upon first listening. It was from this moment that his parents recognized his gift for music making. Ponce later entered the National Conservatory of Music as a pianist and composer until the year 1903, when he moved to Italy to pursue studies at the Conservatorio Giovanni Battista Martini. It was moving to Europe that allowed Ponce to travel to Paris and meet the great Andrés Segovia, where the creation of an incredible guitar catalogue began.

Ponce and Segovia collaborated on a regular basis, creating many Sonatas, solo works, as well as the Concierto del Sur. Part of Segovia's mission was to expand the concert repertoire for a variety of settings and develop pedagogical resources for the instrument. This led to the completion of 24 Preludios modeled in a similar style to the Chopin piano preludes, with one prelude for each key in the circle of fifths. The preludes in this recital are from the 2020 publication by Tilmann Hopstock and Piera Dadomo, which remains closer to the manuscript than other publications. Throughout the 24 preludes, the listener is exposed to a variety of styles, from impressionist harmonies to neo-baroque counterpoint, and even arrangements of popular Spanish and Mexican folk songs.

Paisanos Semos!

León, Tania (b. 1943).

From Havana, Cuba, Tania León is known for her lifetime of inspiration, growing list of compositions, and passionate mentorship. She began piano studies at the age of four in her hometown where she was exposed to a variety of art forms such as jazz, dance, and folkloric music. León completed her B. A in piano at the Carlos Alfredo Peyrellade Conservatory in 1963 and then pursued studies in composition at New York University in 1967 after courageously migrating Cuba in the “freedom flights” movement. It was in New York that León was influenced by musicians such as Ursula Mamlok and Susan B. Anthony, and she began propelling her career through many composer residences. She has collaborated with countless orchestras, chamber ensembles, and musicians throughout the years, leading to great success such as honorary doctorate degrees, and most recently, the Pulitzer music prize in 2021 for her orchestral work *Stride*. León has also collaborated with guitarists Ana Maria Rosado and David Starobin through her two solo guitar works, *Paisanos Semos!* and *Bailarín*

Paisanos Semos! Written for Rosado was premiered in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1984. Rosado later recorded the work in 1986 as part of her debut album titled “We’ve Got Rhythm”! León

indicates that Paisanos Semos! loosely translates to “we’s hillbillies” and is written as a “homage to peasants that till the soil. The work presents many contrasting characters, sonorities, and extended techniques presented in an eclectic style that draws inspiration from Avant Garde western classical music and folkloric rhythms from Cuba. For León, it is motion in her music that gives her ideas meaning, and she tends to write material simply because of her enjoyment for how it sounds. It is through these organic musical ideas that León has created a truly unique and virtuosic contribution to the new guitar repertoire.

Concerto pour guitare et petit orchestre

Villa-Lobos, Heitor (1887-1959).

Having written over 2000 works in his lifetime, the composer, cellist, and guitarist Heitor Villa-Lobos can be defined as one of the most prolific South American composers in history. His music education was cumulative through his exposure to popular music of Brazil, while also studying harmony lessons at the Conservatório de Música in Rio. Villa-Lobos was born in Rio de Janeiro, where he learned to play instruments from exposure to upstairs music nights organized by his father, and was inspired by the works of Bach when he received a score for the Well-Tempered Clavier from his aunt. It was his interest in Brazilian indigenous music and classical repertoire that guided his composition studies throughout his early years. Villa-Lobos first studied composition at the Instituto Nacional de Música in Rio de Janeiro and met the pianist Arthur Rubenstein in 1919 who boosted the composer's reputation by performing his works around the world. This led him to spend the 1920's in Paris where he successfully wrote many new works for orchestra, chamber music, and his large output of works for guitar, including the Concerto pour guitare et petit orchestre written in 1951 for Andrés Segovia.

The guitar concerto was originally named Fantasia Concertante but was later changed to its new title due to the request of a Cadenza from Segovia. The work is comprised of 3 movements in a typical allegro - andante - allegro format. The first movement elaborates on two contrasting motives. One being highly energetic which develops through transposition through many interesting key areas, ending the piece in a C Lydian-like territory. The second motive is inspired by northern Brazilian folk melodies and is highly lyrical and orchestrated in a slower episode between two faster A sections. The second movement is written in ternary form and consists of regular E minor tonal centrality, with hints of the Dorian and Phrygian mode as well. The movement begins with a brief Bach quote from the Well-Tempered Clavier, paving a rather special connection between the shared passion of Bach's music by Villa-Lobos and Segovia. The Cadenza between the second and third movements is a-metrical and written in an improvisatory manner, featuring many virtuosic scale passages juxtaposed with sensitive, chorale-like sections. The cadenza ends by setting up the commonly heard choro rhythm which also establishes the tempo and motivic material for the third movement, Allegro mais non troppo. The final movement is playful and written in a rondo form. The movement utilizes the idiomatic guitar key area of A minor and highlights parallel harmonic motion while posing great challenges to the

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performer's technical ability. The piano reduction of the orchestral part was also written by Heitor Villa-Lobos, serving as a highly effective concert work for guitar and piano