

Mark Nelson, Tuba
Marie Sierra, Piano
Southwest Regional Tuba Euphonium Conference
Pima Community College West Campus Recital Hall
April 12, 2007 7:00 PM
Program Notes

Fantasia Breve by Barton Cummings (b. 1946)

Published by PRB Productions 963 Peralta Ave., Albany, CA 94706-2144.

The following notes were supplied by the composer:

It has been a desire of mine to have the time to concentrate on original composing and at the beginning of 1989, I plotted out a design whereby I could set aside time in large blocks that could be devoted to composing. *Fantasia Breve* is the third composition to be published in 1989. The other two are a set of pieces for solo tuba, now published, and a piece for younger band, also published. Both pieces led me to this current work by a somewhat circuitous route, yet a logical one in my mind. It is interesting to me that all three of the pieces, when once begun, flowed easily and completely and all three required little, if any, rewrite. *Fantasia Breve* is in three movements with the outer movements being fast and the middle movement, slow. A "fantasy" is not usually in any kind of strict form, although each movement is tied together, yet each movement could be placed independently of the others and make a complete piece, albeit short. That they proceed in a logical fashion is, I suppose, because during the time I worked on it, I worked only on it and with the thought that there would be three movements. I wanted to create, even in the slow movement, a virtuoso work that would contain intense rhythmic activity, harmonic diversity and a sense of drama. I also wanted to create a work that would display all of the many stylistic potentials of the tuba without reverting to any unusual or extended performance techniques and at the same time give the piano part its own integrity and independence within the whole. I wrote this piece specifically for Mark Nelson and it is respectfully dedicated to him.

The premiere took place on October 11, 1989 by Mark Nelson and Sylvia Parker at the University of Vermont Music Building Recital Hall.



Barton Cummings enjoys a distinguished international musical career. Recognized as an author, composer, conductor, educator, and performing artist, he has pursued these activities successfully for more than thirty five years. His consistent and scholarly writing have produced three books, more than four hundred articles, scores of reviews and several editorship positions. His work is constantly cited in articles, books and dissertations by other authors. The music of Barton Cummings has been performed throughout the world by such prominent artists and ensembles as Mark Nelson, Mary Ann Craig,

Fritz Kaenzig, Janet Polk, David Deason, Bowling Green State University Euphonium-Tuba Ensemble, the Colonial Tuba Quartet, the Meridian Arts Ensemble Brass Quintet, the Tokyo Bari-Tuba Ensemble, University of Michigan Euphonium-Tuba Ensemble, and the Walnut Creek Concert Band. Recordings of his original and transcribed music can be found on Channel Classics, Crystal Records and Mark Records. As a conductor, he has worked with such groups as the University of New Hampshire Orchestra, D'Albert Summer Orchestra, Greenville (Mississippi) Symphony Orchestra, Concord (CA) Concert Band, Golden Hills Touring Concert Band and Theater Concord (CA). He currently serves as Music Director and Conductor of The Walnut Creek (CA) Concert Band. Mr. Cummings has been involved with music education from kindergarten through grade 12 and spent many years as a college and university teacher. He has held positions at Delta State University (Mississippi), Point Loma College of San Diego, San Diego State University and with several California Community Colleges including Diablo Valley College, Napa Valley College and Solano Community College. An early pioneer in redefining the role of the tuba as a solo instrument, he has been responsible for commissioning more than four dozen compositions for the instrument. His recitals, solo appearances and recordings on the Capra, Coronet and Crystal labels have been critically acclaimed worldwide.

Sonata for Tuba and Piano (Op. 704) by Carson P. Cooman

I. *Speaking of Sunsets*

II. *Build Me a Garden*

III. *Rising at Dawn*

Published by Fabrik Musical Publications, a division of Musik Fabrik. 18 rue Marthe Aureau, 774400 Lagny-sur-Marne, France. www.classicalmusicnow.com.

The following notes were supplied by the composer:

Sonata for Tuba and Piano (2007) was commissioned by and is dedicated to tubist Mark Nelson for premiere at the 2007 Southwest Tuba and Euphonium Conference. The work is in three movements, each using the same basic musical material. Throughout the work, there is an integration of the total chromatic spectrum (represented through row-like constructions) with triadic and tonal elements, particularly connected to the interval of a minor third. The first movement, *Speaking of Sunsets*, is bold and dramatic throughout. The musical material is subjected to a series of circular paths that loop back on themselves until the movement ends. (The title refers to American poet James Tate's poem *Never Again the Same* and also Charles Wuorinen's musical setting of that text.) The second movement, *Build Me a Garden*, takes its title from an original song I overheard while planning this work. It sung by a homeless man who was then sitting on the banks of the Charles River in Boston, Massachusetts. His song (bearing both textual and musical resemblance to various folk songs and African-American spirituals) spoke of hopes and dreams:

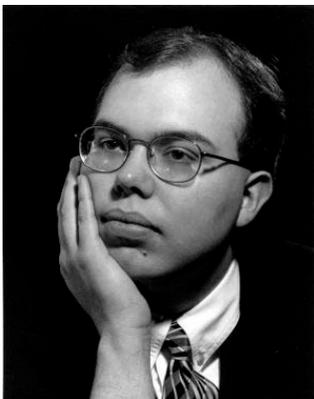
*Build me a garden, far 'cross the sea
Build me a garden, a place I can be
The water is wide, the journey is long.
I've put all my sorrows into this song.*

The movement opens with a slightly modified version of the song, which is developed over the course of the movement. Connections are made between the first movement's material and the pentatonic melody (with its opening intervals of minor thirds). The third movement, *Rising at Dawn*, is a *moto perpetuo*. The ideas from both previous movements are put together in new, dancing combinations. Coming out of the darker first two movements, this movement continually seeks places of joy. The dance breaks down, and a recollection of the first movement leads to a bright coda.

Carson P. Cooman

February 2007

Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA



Carson Cooman is one of the most active American composers of his generation, with over six hundred musical works in many forms, ranging from solo instrumental pieces to operas, and from orchestral works to hymn tunes. He is in continual demand for new commissions, and his music has and continues to be performed on all six inhabited continents. His work is published primarily by MMB Music, Inc. and Musik Fabrik (orchestral/instrumental music) and Wayne Leupold Editions, Inc. (organ/choral music) Recordings of Cooman's music appear on over seven record labels and his music appears in the collections of most music libraries in the United States. Cooman's primary composition studies have been with Bernard Rands, Judith Weir, Alan Fletcher and James Willey. As an active concert organist, Cooman specializes exclusively in the performance of new music. Over 120 new works have

been composed for him by composers from around the world, and his performances of the contemporary composers can be heard on a number of CD recordings. Cooman is also a writer on musical subjects, producing articles and reviews frequently for a number of international publications. He is currently the editor of *Living Music Journal* and has edited musical works of other composers for numerous music publishers. For more information about Cooman's music, visit his website at: <http://www.carsoncooman.com>.

Three Preludes for Piano by George Gershwin (1898-1937) arranged for tuba and piano by Ralph Sauer

No. 1 – *To Bill Daly*

No. 2 – *Blues Lullaby*

No. 3 – *Spanish Prelude*

Published by Cherry Classics Music. www.Cherry-Classics.com.

The *Three Preludes* were rather unique in Gershwin's compositional output in that they were among very few pieces that were published in his lifetime. Countless pianists have learned and recorded these charming movements. According to Edward Jablonski, who wrote the liner notes for *Gershwin's Greatest Hits*, LP RCA LSC-5001, Gershwin called these and similar works "novelettes" and dipped into a notebook of six of these short piano creations to perform for his solo part of a program during the winter of 1926-27 for the Peruvian singer, Marguerite d'Alvarez. Three of these eventually were published as the *Three Preludes*. This new arrangement by Ralph Sauer, Principal Trombonist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, is a wonderful new addition to the transcription literature for the tuba.



Gershwin was born in Brooklyn, New York to Russian Jewish immigrant parents. His father, Morris (Moishe) Gershovitz, changed their family name to Gershwin sometime after emigrating from St. Petersburg, Russia. Gershwin's mother, Rosa Bruskin, also emigrated from Russia. She married Gershovitz four years later. George Gershwin was the second of four children. He first displayed interest in music at the age of ten, when he was intrigued by what he heard at a friend's violin recital. The sound and the way his friend played captured him. His parents had bought a piano for his older brother Ira, but to his parent's surprise and Ira's relief it was George who played it. He tried out various piano teachers for two years, and then was introduced to Charles Hambitzer by Jack Miller, the pianist in the Beethoven Symphony Orchestra. Hambitzer acted as George's mentor until Hambitzer's death in 1918. Hambitzer taught George conventional piano technique, introduced him to

music of the European Classical tradition, and encouraged him to attend orchestral concerts. (At home following such concerts, young George would attempt to reproduce at the piano the music he had heard). He later studied with classical composer Rubin Goldmark and avant-garde composer-theorist Henry Cowell. His first job as a performer was as a piano pounder for Remick's, a publishing company on Tin Pan Alley. His 1917 novelty rag "Rialto Ripples" was a commercial success, and in 1919 he scored his first big national hit with his song "Swanee". 1916 was the year he started working for Aeolian Company and Standard Music Rolls in New York, recording and arranging piano rolls. He produced dozens if not hundreds of rolls under his own and assumed names (pseudonyms attributed to Gershwin include Fred Murtha and Bert Wynn.) He also recorded rolls of his own compositions for the Welte-Mignon reproducing piano of *M. Welte & Sons, Inc.* of New York City, the inventor and first producer of reproducing pianos. As well as recording piano rolls, Gershwin made a brief foray into vaudeville accompanying both Nora Bayes and Louise Dresser on the piano. In 1924, George and Ira collaborated on a musical comedy, *Lady Be Good* which included such future standards as "Fascinating Rhythm" and "The Man I Love." This was followed by *Oh, Kay!* (1926); *Funny Face* in (1927); *Strike Up the Band* (1927 & 1930); *Girl Crazy* (1930), which introduced the standard "I Got Rhythm"; and *Of Thee I Sing* (1931), the first musical comedy to win a Pulitzer Prize. "I Got Rhythm", in particular, became a Jazz Standard, and its chord progression has incredible significance in Jazz. These chord changes known as "Rhythm changes" have been frequently adopted in Jazz literature. In 1924, Gershwin composed his first classical work, *Rhapsody in Blue* for orchestra and piano, which was arranged by Ferde Grofé and premièred with Paul Whiteman's orchestra in New York. It proved to be his most popular work. Gershwin stayed in Paris for a short period of time where he wrote *An American in Paris*. This work received mixed reviews. Eventually he found the music scene in Paris supercilious, and returned to America. Though he hugely admired the French style of music - and did until the day he died - Gershwin remained thoroughly American. His most ambitious composition was

Porgy and Bess (1935). Called by Gershwin himself a "folk opera," the piece premiered in a Broadway theater and is now widely regarded as the most important American opera of the 20th century. Based on the novel Porgy by DuBose Heyward, the action takes place in a black neighborhood in Charleston, South Carolina, and with the exception of several minor speaking roles, all of the characters are black. The music combines elements of popular music of the day, which was strongly influenced by black music, with techniques found in Western opera, such as recitative and leit motifs. Early in 1937, Gershwin began to complain of blinding headaches and a recurring impression that he smelled burned rubber. Unbeknown to him, he had developed a brain tumor. It was in Hollywood, while working on the score of *The Goldwyn Follies* that he collapsed and, on July 11, 1937, died following surgery for the tumor at the age of 38. Gershwin had a 10-year affair with composer Kay Swift, and frequently consulted her about his music. *Oh, Kay* was named for her. Posthumously, Swift arranged some of his music, transcribed some of his recordings, and collaborated with Ira on several projects. Gershwin had also had an affair with Paulette Goddard. Gershwin could be generous, warm, and a friend-in-need, but he could also be vain and more than a trifle egotistical. His friend and champion, the concert pianist Oscar Levant once asked him: "George, if you had it to do all over again, would you still fall in love with yourself?" Gershwin died intestate, and all his property passed to his mother. He is interred at the Westchester Hills Cemetery in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. The Gershwin estate continues to bring in significant royalties from licensing the copyrights on Gershwin's work. The estate supported the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act because its 1923 cutoff date was shortly before Gershwin had begun to create his most popular works. The copyrights on those works expired in 2007 in the European Union and between 2019 and 2027 in the United States of America. George Gershwin was inducted into the Long Island Music Hall of Fame in 2006. There is also a theatre named after him called the George Gershwin Theatre where the Hit Broadway Musical *Wicked* is now playing.

--Biography courtesy of Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Gershwin.

Midnight Variations for tuba and tape (1971) by Walter Ross (b. 1936)

The following notes were supplied by the composer:

The main idea of *Midnight Variations* is to present the evolution of tuba technique in an impressionistic way. This seven-minute piece for solo tuba and tape is a miniature tone-poem in that it is based on an extra-musical idea. I present the tuba as a personality--as live, human music in opposition to the mechanical music on the tape.

The title is rather a fanciful one. The word "variations" in this instance does not refer to a theme or melody which undergoes variations. Instead, as the work unfolds, the listener hears an evolution of tuba technique.

At the beginning, there are mysterious, primeval sounds on the tape which the tuba imitates--not being yet a tuba. The tape then makes a tuba-like sound which the tuba also imitates. The interval expands from a unison to "the perfect bass-line interval". As the tuba practices this interval, the tape slowly fades into rag-time which the tuba accompanies. The tuba soon abandons this imitative role, however, and takes off in another direction--the tape now accompanying the tuba with a "side-man" effect. The tuba becomes more and more virtuosic, eventually overcoming even the tape. This virtuosity ends with "explosions" on the tape, and both, overcome by their exertions; fall back to the primeval sounds of the beginning. *Midnight Variations* was written at the request of Barton Cummings while he was in Vietnam with a service band. At that time I had not yet met him. He was a friend of one of my students who was also serving in Vietnam and who had mentioned to him that I liked to write for brass. He premiered the work, and later I also wrote *Pitdown Fragments* (tuba and tape) for him which he premiered at Carnegie Recital Hall in New York. *Midnight Variations*, a work for tuba solo and electronic tape, has been recorded by Barton Cummings on CAPRA RECORDS: CRS-1210.

--program notes courtesy of www.walterross.com



Walter Ross, whose works have been performed in over 40 countries, is perhaps best known for his compositions featuring brass and woodwinds. Raised in Nebraska, he became a professional orchestral French horn player by the age of seventeen and went on to gain more performance experience in college as a member of the University of Nebraska symphonic band, and as a flute player with a baroque ensemble. Currently he plays bass in the Blue Ridge Chamber Orchestra. After four years of engineering and astronomy, he switched to music, receiving much of his early compositional training under Robert Beadell. While working on his doctoral degree at Cornell (where he studied under Robert Palmer and Karel Husa), he received an Organization of American States Fellowship to study composition privately under Alberto Ginastera in Argentina. The influences

of his own extensive performance background and his musical training under composers who stressed bright orchestration and rhythmic excitement can be heard in many of Ross' over one hundred works. He likes to write music that musicians enjoy performing and audiences enjoy hearing. Many of his recent works are representative of his current interest in neo-modal, pandiatonic composition. Ross has already written a number of major orchestral concertos including ones for oboe and harp, bassoon, clarinet, piano, flute and guitar, trombone, tuba, double bass, and violin. He is currently writing a Concerto for 'Cello and Orchestra. He prefers the concerto form to that of the symphony because of its more varied possibilities for artistic expression in contrasting the solo against the orchestra. Three of his concertos are featured on his latest CD and five more have been recorded and will be released soon. In 1997 he wrote a cantata featuring the poetry of Rita Dove, American Poet Laureate. She sang as the soloist at the premier with the Charlottesville Oratorio Society. Recent choral works include Evensong and Lux Aeterna. Written to honor the victims of 9/11, Lux Aeterna has been performed on a number of occasions. Ross has received a number of awards and prizes and many significant grants and fellowships. His work is widely performed, and many of his compositions have been published and recorded. Currently a resident of Charlottesville, Virginia, he has served as president of the Southeastern Composers League and served as a judge at international composition symposia. He has been a visiting composer at the Aspen Music Festival and a featured composer at several universities and forums and on national and international radio broadcasts, and he is currently a member of the board of the Capital Composers Alliance.

--biography courtesy of www.walterross.com.