A New Concept in popular Orchestral Music

the portland symphony orchestra

paul vermel
music director and conductor

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All compositions or arrangements are by Rudolph Kompanek.

I Something Medieval
The music begins with the familiar Gregorian melody Salve Regina. A similar melody immediately follows in a brisk 6/8 tempo, namely the troubadour tune Reis glorios by the 12th century composer Guiraut de Bornelh. The alternation of these two melodies completes the first section, which emphasizes open-fifth sonorities so typical of the period. A very famous secular tune of the Middle Ages, L’homme arme, follows, first in a rather “authentic” setting, then in a more popular style by the trio. The tune itself is eventually abandoned as the woodwinds and brass become preoccupied by tossing two-bar phrases back and forth.

II The Renaissance, or The Second Beginning
Any recollection of Renaissance music would be incomplete without reference to the extremely lyrical music of William Byrd (1543-1623). Our point of departure is the conclusion of his Great Service, a motet for five voices. We begin with strings alone and evolve to a slightly altered version of the same melody with the trio, only now the context suggests the melodic and harmonic feeling of a “Beatle” tune — a style not so remote from the Renaissance as it might seem. A playful tune characteristic of so much dance music of the period follows. It was originally a lute solo entitled Kemp’s Jig after a famous comedian of the time; however, for reasons good or bad, the composer’s identity remains anonymous. It appears in the form of “theme and variations;” Variation I Two-beat; II Jazz; III Dixieland.

III High Baroque, Middle Baroque, and the Lowest
This section leans more on the “arrangement” of existing tunes than any other segment of the program. Perhaps this is particularly appropriate since the themes “arranged” by us were, in whole or part, already arrangements or imitations of Baroque music. The first section is a rather literal performance of Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5, by H. Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), a
gorgeous Baroque-like melody originally conceived in homage to J. S. Bach. The concluding segment is also a rather literal arrangement of themes from Pulcinella, a ballet by Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) which was in itself an arrangement of themes by the Baroque composer Giovanni Pergolesi (1710-1736). If you are confused by all this please bear with us — perhaps the music can be fun all by itself.

IV  Classica in Eclectica

In borrowing portions of Mozart’s overture from The Marriage of Figaro we have attempted a “marriage of remote styles” by focusing on one important element common to both the trio and the orchestra: the rhythmic intensity. Both rock and classical music share common aesthetics and often common modes of expression — by extending this concept to all musical styles it would seem apparent that all music can be appreciated by all people if we would only stop being so “icky-picky.”

INTERMISSION

V  How Sweet, How Romantic, How Long

Clara Schumann (wife of the famous composer Robert Schumann) apparently did not approve of Brahms’ First Symphony when she wrote “... in spite of its workmanship I feel it lacks melody.” Heritage, however, has chosen to use the third movement of this work precisely because of its lyric beauty. Composers of present day “pop” music (and “serious” music as well) might be pleasantly surprised by occasionally looking backward in time for inspiration rather than always seeking the “new” sound or the “now” sound. Our vast musical heritage, both East and West, is the wisest teacher we have.

This section concludes with a portion of the third movement of the first symphony of Gustav Mahler (1860-1911). That sounds very impressive — in simpler terms it sounds like frere jacque in a minor key.

VI  Impressions à deux

An original composition sets the “impressionistic” mood followed by some “good-humored tampering” with the Rigaudon section of Le Tombeau de Couperin by Maurice Ravel (1875-1937).

VII  A Time of Our Own

We have no one to blame for this conclusion but ourselves.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM
by RUDOLPH KOMPANEK