

NAXOS

WIND BAND CLASSICS

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DRAGON RHYME

Jennifer Higdon • Kurt Weill • Chen Yi

Carrie Koffman, Soprano Saxophone • Anton Miller, Violin

The Hartt School Wind Ensemble • Glen Adsit



Dragon Rhyme

Music for Wind Band

**Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962):
Soprano Saxophone Concerto (2006)**

I have always been struck by the range of power and beauty that comes from saxophones. I have seen a saxophone quartet bring a large school room filled with hundreds of children to a complete halt with one tutti note. Many people don't realize just how much power exists in this group of instruments, and often they may not realize the potential for beauty. The soprano saxophone in particular produces a tone of warmth and a real agility that allows it to sing like none of the other instruments in this group. So it seemed logical, when I was approached by several saxophonists, to arrange my *Oboe Concerto* for this instrument.

The original version of this work was commissioned by The Minnesota Commissioning Club. This arrangement was commissioned by the University of Michigan, the Hartt School, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Jennifer Higdon

**Kurt Weill (1900-50):
Violin Concerto, Op. 12 (1924)**

One of the outstanding composers in the generation that came to maturity after World War I, Kurt Weill was a key figure in the development of modern forms of musical theater. His successful and innovative work for Broadway during the 1940s (he became an American citizen in 1943) was a development in more popular terms of the exploratory stage works that had made him the foremost avant-garde theater composer in the Weimar Republic. Weill, though, initially showed no inclination toward writing for the theater; his early works such as *Symphony No. 1*, are serious and display the influence of Alban Berg, Igor Stravinsky, and Paul Hindemith on the young composer. Perhaps the greatest influence on Weill were not musicians, however, but two playwrights: the leading Expressionist Georg Kaiser and the vitriolic Bertolt Brecht. In Weill, the collaboration between Weill and Brecht produced in 1928, among others, a work which practically redefined music theater: *The Three Penny Opera*.

The *Concerto for Violin and Wind Orchestra* which Weill composed in the early summer of 1924, shortly before Busoni's death, is the first large-scale work he wrote after his time with Busoni – and the first work in which he consciously declares his independence, if only in technical procedure and not in aesthetic principles, from his beloved teacher. The concerto was written for the violinist Joseph Szigeti, but was given its premiere by Marcel Darieux at an ISCM (International Society for Contemporary Music) concert, conducted by Walter Straram in 1925. During the 1920s, it became one of his most widely performed instrumental works. The philosopher T.W. Adorno wrote the following regarding the work:

"In this piece, the lines of Weill's development intersect; the Busoni-esque lucidity is still there, playfully avoiding both dense polyphony and indeed the melodic plasticity which Weill was later to round out so strikingly. There is a strong trace of Stravinsky to be found in the classical, masterly clarity of the sound and in much of the wind writing. The later Weill can be heard in the dramatic pungency which often enough contradicts the classical balance, but most remarkable of all is a Mahlerian quality, at once garishly expressive and painfully laughing, which calls everything playful and secure into question. Weill thus relinquishes objective realism in favor of the dangerous, surrealist realm he inhabits today. The piece stands isolated and alien: that is, in the right place."

Steven Dennis Bodner

Chen Yi (b. 1953): Dragon Rhyme (2010)

Commissioned by the National Wind Ensemble Consortium Group, and premiered by the Hartt Wind Ensemble at Carnegie Hall, Chen Yi's *Dragon Rhyme* for symphonic band is in two movements: *I. Mysteriously – Harmoniously; II. Energetically*. The first movement is lyrical and the second powerful. Featuring the basic intervals found from Beijing Opera music, the thematic material in both movements is matched, which is used economically for development throughout the work. The instrumental texture is rich in colors, from transparent and delicate to angular and strong. Taking the image of the dragon, which is auspicious, fresh and vivid, the music is layered and multidimensional. It symbolizes Eastern culture. When it meets the world, it becomes a part of the global family.

Chen Yi

Carrie Koffman



Carrie Koffman joined the faculty of The Hartt School in the fall of 2003. Prior to this, she held positions as Assistant Professor of Saxophone at Penn State University, and at the University of New Mexico, and taught at Boston University. She has performed as a soloist and chamber musician throughout the United States, Europe, New Zealand, and in Thailand, China and Argentina. Her recording projects include the recent CDs *Carillon Sky* and *Dialogues*. Koffman holds a bachelor's degree in saxophone performance and music education from the University of Michigan, where she studied with Donald Sinta, and a master's degree in saxophone performance from the University of North Texas, where she studied with James Riggs and Eric Nestler. She is also a certified Kripalu Yoga Teacher and teaches Yoga for Performers.

Anton Miller



Since giving his Carnegie Hall concerto début in 1992 with the New Chamber Orchestra of New York, American violinist Anton Miller has appeared throughout the United States and abroad as a soloist, chamber musician, recitalist, and pedagogue. Her gave the world première in Beijing of Xiaogang Ye's *Last Paradise* for violin and orchestra, which was taped for broadcast within Asia and subsequently released on CD. He has made several appearances in Brazil to tour Tchaikovsky, Sibelius and Brahms Concertos with the Orchestra Sinfônica de Campinas, and has undertaken recital tours in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, England and China. His complete discography can be found on the Dorian, Jericho, Full House, Hugo and Klavier labels. Miller received his Bachelor of Music degree from Indiana University as a student of Franco Gulli and was awarded the prestigious Performer's Certificate. He completed his Master of Music at The Juilliard School as a scholarship violin student of Dorothy DeLay and studied chamber music with Felix Galimir and the members of the Juilliard Quartet.

The Hartt Wind Ensemble



The Hartt Wind Ensemble is nationally recognized for its quality performances and innovative programming. During the past ten years the ensemble has premiered twenty works and has had in residence composers Michael Daugherty, Joseph Schwantner, Joseph Turrin, Joan Tower, Susan Botti, Bright Sheng, Michael Colgrass, William Bolcom, Chen Yi and John Corigliano among others. Guest conductors have included H. Robert Reynolds, Frank Battisti, Joseph Turrin, Eric Rombach-Kendall and Tim Reynish. Guest soloists have included Robert Black (Double Bass), Ben Toth (Percussion), Cherie Caluda (Soprano), Carrie Koffman (Saxophone), Marc Goldberg (Bassoon), Joseph Alessi (Trombone), Scott Hartman (Trombone), James Jackson (Euphonium), Phil Smith (Trumpet) and the American Brass Quintet. The ensemble has performed at two Eastern Regional College Band Directors National Association Conferences and at the 2007 (Ann Arbor, MI) and 2011 (Seattle, WA) national CBDNA conferences. In 2010 the ensemble made its Carnegie Hall début in Stern Hall performing the world première of Chen Yi's *Dragon Rhyme*. The ensemble released its first recording (*Passaggi*) in the Naxos Wind Band Classics series (8.572109). *Gramophone* magazine described the Ensemble's playing as "stellar".

Glen Adsit



Glen Adsit is the Director of Bands and the Associate Director of the Instrumental Studies Division at The Hartt School where he conducts the Wind Ensemble and the Foot in the Door ensemble and guides all aspects of the graduate wind conducting degrees. He was appointed Director of Bands at The Hartt School in the fall of 2000 following an appointment as Associate Director of Bands at the University of New Mexico. From 1986 to 1992 he taught at both the junior high and high school levels in the Plymouth-Canton School District in Michigan. In 2010 the Hartt Wind Ensemble made its Carnegie Hall début in Stern Auditorium performing the world première of *Dragon Rhyme* by Chen Yi. The ensemble also performed at the 2007 (Ann Arbor, Michigan) and 2011 (Seattle, Washington) College Band Directors National Association Conference and twice at the Eastern Division CBDNA Conferences. Ensembles under his direction have performed at Hill Auditorium (Ann Arbor), the Musikverein (Vienna), Benroya Ilsley Hall (Seattle) Carnegie Hall's Stern Hall (New York) and the Central Conservatory (Beijing) among others.

Also available:

 WIND BAND CLASSICS 

PASSAGGI

Joseph Schwantner • Stephen Michael Gryc
Leslie Bassett • Joseph Turrin • Nebojsa Zivkovic

Joseph Alessi, Trombone • Benjamin Toth, Percussion
The Hartt School Wind Ensemble • Glen Adsit



8.572109

DRAGON RHYME

- 1 Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962):
Soprano Saxophone Concerto (2006)* 16:16
- Kurt Weill (1900-50):
Violin Concerto, Op. 12 (1924)** 27:07
- 2 I. Andante con moto 9:49
- 3 II. Notturmo: Allegro un poco tenuto –
Cadenza: Moderato – Vivace –
Serenata: Allegretto 10:41
- 4 III. Allegro molto, un poco agitato 6:37
- Chen Yi (b. 1953):
Dragon Rhyme (2010) 13:21
- 5 I. Mysteriously – Harmoniously 7:17
- 6 II. Energetically 6:04

Carrie Koffman, Soprano Saxophone*

Anton Miller, Violin**

The Hartt School Wind Ensemble
Glen Adsit

Recorded at Lincoln Theater, University of Hartford Campus, USA, on 5th and 6th May, 2009 (track 1), 14th and 15th December, 2010 (tracks 2-4), and 27th and 28th May, 2010 (tracks 5-6)
Producers: Glen Adsit, Chen Yi, Carrie Koffman, Matt Aubin and Rita Porfiris
Engineers: Justin Kurtz and Gabe Herman
Assistant Engineers: Adam Grover and Gahyae Ryu
Publishers: Lawdon Press (track 1); Universal Edition (tracks 2-4); Carl Fisher (tracks 5-6)
Cover image by Anekoho (Dreamstime.com)



The wind band offers considerable variety and color to composers, as demonstrated by these three disparate works. Jennifer Higdon's *Soprano Saxophone Concerto* brings to the instrument an unerring warmth and sizzling dexterity perfectly suited to its plangent beauty. Kurt Weill's 1924 *Violin Concerto* exudes neo-classicism, Mahlerian influence and a pungent dynamism that account for its popularity. Chen Yi's *Dragon Rhyme* employs musical intervals familiar from Beijing Opera, in a work rich in textual color and vivid intensity.

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