Euphonium Unleashed

Masahito Kuroda, Jake English, Aaron Martin, Eric Neely, Byron Walters, euphoniums · Robyn Tan, piano

Program Notes by Jackson Harmeyer

John Philip Sousa

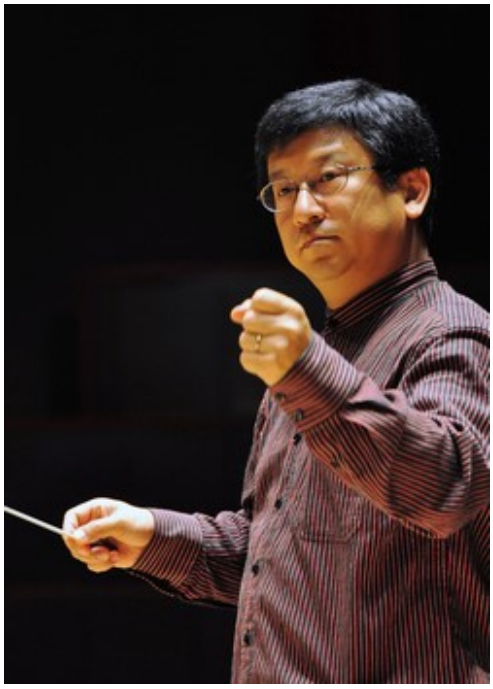
The third day of our Sugarmill Music Festival begins with music for euphonium, a valved brass instrument with a resounding baritone to tenor range. This instrument is similar in shape and tone to the larger tuba and is sometimes called the tenor tuba. The first euphoniums, like the first tubas, were developed in the early nineteenth century as replacements to the various sizes of the ophicleide. The euphonium and tuba had a significant advantage over the ophicleide: these newer instruments had valves which made them easier to play than the ophicleide which only had keys for pitch control. The Weimar bandmaster Ferdinand Sommer was the first soloist on the euphonium, and also often receives credit for having developed this instrument. His euphonium, however, was more likely created by Franz Bock of Vienna who did not patent the euphonium until 1844, a year after Sommer began gaining recognition as a euphonium player. Sommer won much acclaim for the euphonium when he played it for Queen Victoria at the London Great Exhibition of 1851. There he offered two names for the instrument—the *Sommerophone* and the *Euphonion*—but it was the latter name which stuck as anglicized to "euphonium."

Within a few years, the euphonium had become the most important low brass instrument in wind bands. Numerous Russian concert and military bands utilized it in their ensembles as did those in Germany and Great Britain. Wind bands were also of critical importance to the musical life of our country in the decades following the American Civil War and leading into the twentieth century. The Irish immigrant Patrick S. Gilmore was America's first great bandmaster, his acclaim later exceeded by bandmasters John Philip Sousa and Victor Herbert. In the United States, a special kind of euphonium emerged called the double-bell euphonium which had two bells: one which carried the standard euphonium sound and another which could give the impression of a trombone. This double-bell euphonium was even mentioned in the lyrics of "Seventy-Six Trombones," the best-remembered song from the 1957 Broadway musical *The Music Man* by Meredith Wilson.

Although the euphonium quickly established itself as a valued member of the wind band, the instrument never did find a permanent place in the symphony orchestra. In the first century after its invention, only a handful of composers were willing to make room for the euphonium in their orchestral works. Even then, these occasional appearances usually came as brief solos, specifically designed to exploit the euphonium's novel tone color. Richard Strauss, for example, included the euphonium in his tone poems *Don Quixote* and *Ein Heldenleben* (*The Hero's Life*) as did Maurice Ravel in his orchestration of *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Gustav Holst also gave solo roles to the euphonium in both the *Mars* and *Jupiter* movements of his *Planets* suite. On the contrary, the largely forgotten British composer Havergal Brian assigned a more integral role to the euphonium in many of his thirty-two symphonies: in his colossal First Symphony, subtitled *The Gothic*, Brian included parts for two euphoniums and two tubas; later symphonies also made fuller use of these low brass instruments.

Many players of the euphonium, familiar with the unique beauty and timbral range of their instrument, feel that the instrument's full potential has yet to be unleashed. Masahito Kuroda has become a great advocate for the euphonium: in addition to spectral analyses of euphonium sound samples and his exploration into the instrument's historical low brass relatives, Kuroda has also promoted music for multiple euphoniums. He has made arrangements of orchestral and chamber

works for euphonium ensemble, either playing the multiple parts himself through recording technology or encouraging his talented students to join him for live performances.



Yasuhide Ito

Our program begins with *Scarborough Fair*, a traditional English ballad here arranged for euphonium quartet by Bill Reichenbach. The melody and text are hundreds of years old and have connections to several of the ballads collected by Francis James Child in his late nineteenth-century compilation, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (commonly referred to as the "Child Ballads"). By far the best-known version today is the one popularized by the folk duo Simon and Garfunkel. It was included as the first song on their 1966 album *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme*, and later released as a single. Theirs is the melancholic melody we hear this afternoon.

The Japanese composer **Yasuhide Ito (born 1960)** contributes two works to today's concert. The first is *Tchaikovskiana*, a 2005 work for euphonium quartet which draws on quotations from this Russian composer. Later, following our selection by Reicha, we hear Ito's *Four Euphoniums for You*, another 2005 piece this time written for euphonium quartet and piano. Ito is certainly one of today's most prolific composers with more than one thousand works to his credit. He is best-known for his pieces for wind band, including his *Gloriosa* and *Festal Scenes*, but he has also written orchestral, chamber, and piano music. His opera *Mr. Cinderella* received much acclaim from Japanese critics when it premiered in 2001; it has since been followed by a second opera, *AMO*, in 2015. He is a professor at Senzoku Gakuen College of Music in Kawasaki, Japan and is highly-respected as a conductor, making guest appearances across east Asia.

Simone Mantia

The American euphonium player **Simone Mantia (1873-1951)** was well-respected as one of his era's leading virtuosi on his instrument. Born in Italy, he came to the United States while still a boy. Even in his teens, he was already playing euphonium professionally in wind bands and trombone in orchestras, and he continued these pursuits into adulthood. He was a prized soloist in the Gilmore and Sousa bands, and then spent twenty years playing in the band of his friend Arthur Pryor, who had been a trombonist with Sousa. Concurrently, Mantia spent thirty-five years as principal trombonist of the Metropolitan Opera orchestra and occasionally played trombone with the New York Philharmonic. It is his variations on the popular tune "Believe Me, if All Those Endearing Young Charms" which we here this afternoon. Its arrangement by David Werden for euphonium and piano utilizes all the tricks—charms as it were—that Mantia brought to his playing.

We next hear works by two nineteenth-century composers. **Ludwig Maurer (1789-1878)** was a German-born violinist and composer who, following international concert tours, settled in Saint Petersburg. In his lifetime, he was much better-known for the compositions he wrote for his own instrument, the violin. Today, however, he is remembered with Victor Ewald as one of the first composers to write for brass quintet. His *Four Pieces*, which have the delicacy of string chamber music by Mendelssohn and Schumann, were arranged for euphonium by John Stevens. Like Maurer, **Anton Reicha (1770-1836)** made his career away from his native country. Bohemian by birth, Reicha spent time in Bonn and Vienna, where he was a colleague and friend to Beethoven, before finally settling in Paris. There, he taught at the Conservatoire where his numerous students included Berlioz and Liszt. His Horn Trios, Op. 82 are well-known among players of French horn. They consist of twenty-four short pieces in a variety of forms, including canons and a fugue as well as lighter dance genres like the minuet and musette. The arrangement for euphoniums heard this afternoon is by Dr. Kuroda.

Our program closes with the Dance No. 1 for euphonium quartet by **Kenyon Wilson (born 1970)**. A tuba player and composer, Wilson is Associate Professor of Low Brass and Music Theory at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He is

also Principal Tubist with the orchestras of Tuscaloosa, Alabama and Augusta, Georgia. His compositions are largely for concert band or one or more tubas or euphoniums. His Dance No. 1 is a quick, cheery work with a slight Latin swing. From the opening oompahs, it grows a theme of considerably more interest. Indeed, it affirms in its brief span what our entire program has demonstrated: the incredible potential available to the euphonium.

About Jackson. Jackson Harmeyer is a graduate student pursuing his master's degree in musicology at the University of Louisville where, in April 2017, he was awarded the Gerhard Herz Music History Scholarship. Previously, Jackson graduated *summa cum laude* from the Louisiana Scholars' College in Natchitoches, Louisiana following the completion of his undergraduate thesis, "Learning from the Past: The Influence of Johann Sebastian Bach upon the Soviet Composers." From 2014 to 2016, Jackson served as director of the successful chamber music series, Abendmusik Alexandria, and since that time has remained concert annotator for presenters of classical music across Louisiana. His current research interests include French spectral music and the compositions of Kaija Saariaho. He recently shared this research in March 2018 at the American Musicological Society South-Central Chapter's annual meeting in Asheville, North Carolina. Also a composer, Jackson has worked to integrate the vocabulary and grammar of modern music into compositions which are not only innovative but also engaging to the general listener. His compositions have been performed at the Sugarmill Music Festival and New Music on the Bayou.

Read additional program notes by Jackson at www.JacksonHarmeyer.com.