Program

August 14, 2013, 5:15 pm
Beinecke Mezzanine

Strike Up the Band (George Gershwin, arr. Bill Holcombe)

Porgy and Bess Suite (George Gershwin, arr. Luther Henderson)

I. Overture/Jasbo Brown Blues and Summertime
II. It Ain't Necessarily So
III. Bess, You Is My Woman Now
IV. I Loves You, Porgy
V. A Woman Is a Sometime Thing and I Got Plenty O' Nuttin'
VI. I'm on My Way

Intermission

Beale Street Blues (W.C. Handy, arr. Luther Henderson)

C'est Magnifique (Cole Porter, arr. Henrik Madsen)

Anything Goes (Cole Porter, arr. Alan Fernie)

Alligator Crawl (Fats Waller, arr. Luther Henderson)

Maple Leaf Rag (Scott Joplin, arr. Gordon A Adnams)

The Entertainer (Scott Joplin, trans. Fred Mills)

St. Louis Blues (W.C. Handy, arr. Luther Henderson)

Ensemble

Brass
Drew Mazurek, trumpet
Olivia Malin, trumpet
Junius Johnson, french horn
Kevin Dombrowski, trombone
Jason Arnold, tuba

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About Brass

Since 1999 *Brass* has brought its particular brand of creative and innovative programming to Yale and the greater New Haven area. Originally born out of love for the wide variety of performance capabilities of brass instruments, the group has always been characterized by a playful levity which dances around the serious virtuosity of its performances.

From its inaugural concert on December 2, 1999, modestly titled "*Brass:* Five Guys in Concert," the ensemble has demonstrated a commitment to crafting performances that take audiences on a journey through the myriad tonal colors and moods possible on brass instruments. Each of *Brass*'s nearly fifty concerts has explored this vast range in its own way. It has become part of the group's passion in programming to utilize these different colors to tell a story through the narrative of a single performance.

Brass has partnered with many other organizations and ensembles through the years, including the Yale Concert Band, the Saybrook College Orchestra, the Opera Theatre of Yale College, the Yale Glee Club, Mighty Purple, and the Brubeck brothers. These partnerships are an expression of a firm commitment to camaraderie in the effort of making music, and to the accessibility of music for all ages and tastes. This is reflected in the great variety of music *Brass* has played through the years as well as in *Brass*'s commitment to fostering new compositions for the brass quintet repertoire, from both student and professional composers.

The heart of every *Brass* season is the *Marble and Brass* series. Now in their 14th year, these concerts are the result of a fruitful partnership with the Beinecke Library. So fundamental is this series to the identity of *Brass* that it considers the Beinecke its home performing space. The season turns around the two concerts of the *Marble and Brass* series each year, which are the focus of much of the ensemble's creative efforts.

The highest performance standards and a simple joy in music: these are the things that, for *Brass,* make serious music serious fun.

Program Notes

By Junius Johnson

Among the treasures of the Beinecke's collections are letters and other documents from many of the shining lights of the early days of perhaps the most American of art forms, jazz. From the earliest days of the blues through the heights of the Harlem Renaissance, these papers provide a window into the development of a musical genre loved throughout the world. Our program today is a brief stroll down the gallery of some of the greats who shaped the course of this rich musical heritage.

Of the instruments comprising our ensemble, three of them played central roles in the new music. The trumpet and the trombone were staples of jazz and blues from the very beginning, and the New Orleans street bands which would so deeply affect the character of Dixieland music were rarely without a tuba. The french horn, however, was conspicuously absent from such settings, appearing only occasionally as a non-solo instrument in the jazz big bands of the '40s and '50s. To this day, most jazz bands do not use horns, and horn players rarely receive jazz training.

The other unusual component of our ensemble is the piccolo trumpet, pitched an octave higher than the standard trumpet. While jazz is known for screaming trumpet solos (thanks in no small part to such stars as Dizzy Gillespie and Maynard Ferguson), the piccolo trumpet, developed in 1905 but not widely adopted until 1960, missed the boat in the early years of jazz. Like the horn, it is primarily a classical instrument, most often employed to allow the players of modern instruments to perform Baroque works written for a trumpet very different from its modern descendent.

These two interloping instruments will play an important part in our performance today. The piccolo trumpet will often take the role normally assigned to the clarinet, riding high and shrill over the rest of the ensemble with light and frantic flourishes. The horn by contrast will often grab the role given to the saxophone, both a solo instrument and a smooth base of sound for the trombone and trumpets to play over. However, many of the arrangements we are presenting today also require the horn player to borrow the techniques of jazz trumpeters, stretching the range of the instrument and the tone it can produce to convey something of the deep longing and suffering that pervades much of the music emerging in this period. Listen carefully to both these instruments and their interactions with the rest of the ensemble throughout today's performance.

Strike Up the Band (1927), George Gershwin

George Gershwin, the American composer of Russian-Jewish heritage, first worked in Tin Pan Alley as a "song-plugger," something of an on-demand pianist. He would sit in the music store on the mezzanine, and when a customer wanted to hear how a piece would sound, he would play it for them in an attempt to get them to buy it. During this time he began composing, including the song "Rialto Ripples" in 1917, which was a successful rag when that genre was on the eve of being eclipsed.

Throughout his life, Gershwin attempted to study with great classical performers and composers, such as Nadia Boulanger, Maurice Ravel, and Arnold Schoenberg. He was always turned away, often on the basis of a fear that if he received too much classical training it would ruin the brilliance of what he was already doing. Ravel for instance is said to have asked him: "Why be a second-rate Ravel, when you are a first-rate Gershwin?"

"Strike Up the Band" is from a musical of the same name satirizing America's interest in war. Accordingly, the song is a parody of military marches. In 1936, Gershwin gave it to UCLA as a fight song. It is still used as part of the pre-game show at football games and at home basketball games.

Porgy and Bess (1935), George Gershwin

Porgy and Bess posed a great challenge to critics from its very beginnings. Should it be treated as an opera, or as a musical? Was its portrayal of African-Americans racist? Was it hopelessly marred by insufficient editing, making its 4-hour length too long for audiences? None of these concerns and controversies was enough to stop its rise to a place of prominence in 20th-century American

music, and its eventual recognition as an opera, first by the Houston Grand Opera in 1976, and at last by the Metropolitan Opera in 1985.

The show is based on a novel by Dubose Heyward, and the idea for a collaboration around this text between Gershwin and the author goes back to 1926, when Gershwin first read the book. Work didn't really begin until 1934, however, and the show was premiered the following year with a classically trained all-African-American cast.

Porgy and Bess is the story of Porgy, a disabled beggar living in Catfish Row, a fictitious slum of Charleston, South Carolina, and Bess, girlfriend of a violent dockworker (Crown). The opera follows the two characters who, although in love, are constantly frustrated by the society around them and their own weakness. Among the cast of characters, Clara and Jake, a young couple with an infant, also play a prominant role.

The story being told is dark and heartbreaking, and the ending is not a happy one. Yet the richness of Gershwin's music seems to tell a different story, and a more hopeful one. In our version, as the various instruments take turns with acrobatic passages of virtuosic difficulty and lyrical solos, both the anguish and suffering and the patient hope which characterize this great opera come through.

I. Overture/Jasbo Brown Blues and Summertime

Our suite begins with music taken from the show's overture. The original overture, more than 10 minutes long, reminds one of Gershwin's earlier symphonic work, "An American in Paris." The chords and melodies are all Gershwin, immediately setting one within his unmistakable tonal world. The overture, in the course of introducing nearly all the major themes of the show, is itself a major work of composition. Our version draws from this rich musical variety to present a much shorter introduction. Where the original vacillates between fast and slow tempi, our version drives ahead, presenting the most difficult technical passages by way of introduction to a very difficult suite.

The overture is followed by "Jasbo Brown Blues." Jasbo Brown was a character in another of Dubose Heyward's works, *Jasbo Brown and Selected Poems*. Supposedly the founder of jazz, he was a wandering musician from Memphis. He appears at the beginning of *Porgy and Bess* to play the piano while the couples dance on stage. He has no further role in the show, being mainly present to establish the mood of Catfish Row.

This blues gives way without interruption to "Summertime," a lullaby sung by Clara, who will drown at the end of act 2. The best-known of all the tunes from the show, the song has become a jazz standard and has been covered more than 33,000 times. The lyrics, meant to soothe the child, are in fact the opposite of the situation Clara and Jake find themselves in. The song therefore shows a mother's dreams for her child and her own life; in the face of the harsh realities of Catfish Row, the intense longing expressed in the song is also marked by no little bitterness that life has not been as the child Clara must have dreamed it.

Summertime,
And the livin' is easy
Fish are jumpin'
And the cotton is high

Oh, Your daddy's rich
And your mamma's good lookin'
So hush little baby
Don't you cry

One of these mornings
You're going to rise up singing
Then you'll spread your wings
And you'll take to the sky

But until that morning
There's a'nothing can harm you
With your daddy and mammy standing by

II. It Ain't Necessarily So

The next song in our suite, "It Ain't Necessarily So," comes from act 2, scene 2. Sportin' Life, the drug dealer who constantly tempts Bess to give in to her weakness for "Happy Dust," stands up at a picnic to deliver a "sermon." The song is really an expression of

disbelief in the stories recounted in the Bible ("It ain't necessarily so/ The t'ings dat yo' li'ble / To read in de Bible"). The song shocks the character Serena, who chastises Sportin' Life and the rest.

The role of this song in the show is both to give the feeling of the celebratory atmosphere of the church-picnic setting and to be a showpiece for the character Sportin' Life. In our version, this song serves as a showpiece for the trombone, which maintains the solo role throughout.

III. Bess, You Is My Woman Now

This song occurs at the end of the scene prior to the picnic in act 2. Sportin' Life has just tried to convince Bess to run away with him to New York City. She has refused, so he offers her some happy dust to help convince her. The strength of Bess's new desire to give up drugs is tested, but she is rescued by Porgy, who drives Sportin' Life away. Left alone on stage, the two express their love for each other.

IV. I Loves You Porgy

This song, from act 2, scene 3, comes after Porgy reveals that he knows that Bess has been with her old boyfriend, Crown. Bess loves Porgy and wants to stay with him, but she is afraid of her own weakness, especially when it comes to Crown. Porgy begins to consider what would happen if Crown were out of the picture; Bess, in response, begs him to protect her. The eventual result will be that Porgy kills Crown in a fight in act 3, scene 1. The lyrics show Bess's fear of both Crown and herself, and her desire to remain with Porgy:

I loves you, Porgy, don't let him take me
Don't let him handle me
And drive me mad
If you can keep me
I wanna stay here with you forever
I've got my man
Someday I know he's coming to call me
He's going to handle me and hold me
So, it' going to be like dying, Porgy
When he calls me
But when he comes I know I'll have to go
I loves you, Porgy, don't let him take me
Honey, don't let him handle me
And drive me mad
If you can keep me
I wanna stay here with you forever
I've got my man!

V. A Woman Is a Sometime Thing and *I Got Plenty O' Nuttin'*

The first of these songs, "A Woman is a Sometime Thing," comes from act 1. It is Jake's attempt at a lullaby for his and Clara's child. A glance at the lyrics shows why it is not very effective at calming the child:

Listen to yo' daddy warn you
'Fore you start a-traveling
Woman may born you, love you and mourn you
But a woman is a sometime thing
Yes a woman is a sometime thing

Yo' mammy is the first to name you
Then she'll tie you to her apron string
Then she'll shame you and she'll blame you
Till yo' woman comes to claim you
'Cause a woman is a sometime thing
Yes a woman is a sometime thing

Don't you never let a woman grieve you
Jus' 'cause she got yo' weddin' ring
She'll love you and deceive you
Then she'll take yo' clothes and leave you
'Cause a woman is a sometime thing
Yes a woman is a sometime thing

These lyrics also add an element of tragedy to the deep love Clara feels for Jake, which drives her out in the hurricane to look for him (leading to her death); his feelings towards her do not seem to be exactly commensurate.

The second song, "I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'," is sung by Porgy, giddy on his new love for Bess, in act 2, scene 1. It is reprised in an ironic vein when Porgy has to watch Bess sail away to the church picnic, to which he himself is unable to go because of his handicap.

VI. I'm on My Way

We end with the last song of the opera. Porgy is called down to the police station in connection with the investigation into Crown's murder. Before he goes, Sportin' Life tells him that corpses bleed in the presence of their killers. This makes Porgy afraid, and he refuses to identify Crown's body. As a result, he is thrown into jail for contempt. Sportin' Life tells Bess that Porgy will be locked up for a long time, and continues his efforts to get her to go to New York with him. He is eventually successful. When Porgy is released from jail a week later, he returns to Catfish Row. He has made a lot of money gambling in jail, and is doling out gifts to everyone. Bess is nowhere to be found, however. When he learns that she has gone to New York with Sportin' Life, he sets off after her, singing this song. It is with the beginning of this journey, which seems as if it will be Porgy's most difficult challenge yet, that the show ends.

The lyrics, which are Porgy's prayer for strength, are ambiguous. Deeply akin to a spiritual, they seem to be more about death than a trip to New York.

I'm on my way to a Heav'nly Lan',
I'll ride dat long, long road.
If You are there to guide my han'.
Oh Lawd, I'm on my way.
I'm on my way to a Heav'nly Lan'-
Oh Lawd. It's a long, long way, but
You'll be there to take my han'.

Whatever the case may be, with no indication given whether Porgy will be successful, the ending offers little comfort to an audience hoping for a happy, romantic conclusion. In spite of this somewhat depressing realism, the music offers the catharsis the audience seeks, building to a rousing and satisfying climax.

Beale Street Blues (1916), W.C. Handy

William Christopher Handy (1873–1958) is widely known as the Father of the Blues (the title of his 1941 autobiography). While he was not the inventor of blues, he was largely responsible for its transition from a regional form to a nationally embraced style. As an African-American youth in Alabama, he had to save money from odd jobs to buy instruments, and then keep those instruments hidden from his father, who disapproved of them. An accomplished trumpeter, Handy toured with several bands before eventually becoming established in Memphis in 1909. It was here, playing at clubs on Beale Street, that Handy would write the tunes that would bring him lasting fame, and forever establish the city of Memphis as the home of the blues.

"Beale Street Blues," produced during the last year of Handy's residence in Memphis, proved to be one of the composer's most successful works. In a 1958 film story of W.C. Handy's life, Ella Fitzgerald performs this song opposite Nat King Cole; our version showcases the horn, with significant solo passages for the trombone.

C'est Magnifique (1953), Cole Porter

Cole Porter (B.A., 1913) is one of Yale's most celebrated sons. Author of the Yale fight song "Bulldog," Porter was a founding member of the Whiffenpoofs, president of the Yale Glee Club, and an active participant in the Yale Dramatic Society (the Dramat). After an ill-advised stint at Harvard (first in law, then in music), Porter would go on to make his influence known in the concert hall, on Broadway, and on the silver screen.

"C'est Magnifique" was written in 1953 for the musical *Can-Can*. Winner of Tony Awards for best actress and best choreography, the show tells the story of a dance hall in Montmartre where a new dance, the can-can, is being performed. The establishment is under attack by a judge who wishes to see it shut down. "C'est Magnifique," early in the first act, is the song where the judge unwillingly falls in love with La Môme Pistache, the proprietress of the dance hall.

Anything Goes (1934), Cole Porter

"Anything Goes" is from Porter's 1934 musical of the same name. The show takes place aboard an ocean liner steaming from New York to London, and centers around the antics of Billy Crocker, a young Wall Street broker, who has stowed away on the ship in hopes of winning the heart of Hope Harcourt, an heiress engaged to marry Lord Evelyn Oakleigh. The show is a carnival of mistaken identity, disguises, and failed plots.

The song which gives its name to the whole show is about modern love, where all the rules have changed and all bets are off. *Anything Goes* has been referenced many times in subsequent popular culture. Perhaps most notably, the title song was sung in Mandarin Chinese by the female lead at the beginning of *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. The first verse provided Malcolm X with one of his well-known sayings: "We didn't land on Plymouth Rock; Plymouth Rock landed on us!" The first two verses provide an excellent sense of the song's flavor:

Times have changed
And we've often rewound the clock
Since the Puritans got a shock
When they landed on Plymouth Rock.
If today
Any shock they should try to stem
'Stead of landing on Plymouth Rock,
Plymouth Rock would land on them.

In olden days, a glimpse of stocking
Was looked on as something shocking.
But now, God knows,
Anything goes.
Good authors too who once knew better words
Now only use four-letter words
Writing prose.
Anything goes.
If driving fast cars you like,
If low bars you like,
If old hymns you like,
If bare limbs you like,
If Mae West you like,
Or me undressed you like,
Why, nobody will oppose.
When ev'ry night the set that's smart is in-
truding in nudist parties in
Studios.
Anything goes.

Alligator Crawl (1934), Fats Waller

Thomas Wright "Fats" Waller (1904–1943) was one of the most popular performers of his time and a prolific songwriter. It is difficult to say just how many songs he wrote, and which ones, because financial straits often forced him to sell the rights to his songs, and sometimes his collaborators would take credit for his work. According to his son, Waller claimed to have had to sell the rights to "I Can't Give You Anything but Love, Baby" and "On the Sunny Side of the Street" (both attributed to Jimmy McHugh). Whatever the final composition of any list of his songs, it is certainly extensive and includes many well-loved standards, of which the best known are "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Ain't Misbehavin'."

Waller was kidnapped in 1926 in Chicago, and taken to the Hawthorne Inn to play at gunpoint for Al Capone's birthday party. Once he realized the gangsters had no intention of harming him, he warmed to the gig, and is said to have performed for three days.

"Alligator Crawl" was recorded in 1934.

Maple Leaf Rag (1899), Scott Joplin

The heyday of ragtime music, popular in St. Louis and New Orleans, was 1897–1918. Built on the march rhythms of John Philip Sousa and influenced by African-American syncopation, it formed a bridge between the popular outdoor concert music and the jazz music that was about to take America by storm in the late 1910s and early '20s. In spite of its brief popularity, ragtime influenced such

major classical composers as Debussy and Stravinsky, and enjoyed renewed popularity in the '70s, following an album of Joplin rags that went gold and the movie *The Sting*, which featured several ragtime pieces.

Of all the ragtime composers, Scott Joplin (1867/8–1917) reigns as the undisputed king. With his 44 rags, he did more than anyone to define the genre. "Maple Leaf Rag," one of his earliest compositions, is considered to be the archetypal rag. Joplin knew it was good: he boasted to a friend before its publication that it would make him the king of ragtime composers. It did exactly that, and was imitated numerous times in the years to come.

The tune is simpler than Joplin's later rags, and perhaps this added to its popularity. It was a success the composer would never match again. No traditional recordings of Joplin performing it exists, although there are eight rolls for player piano of the piece made by Joplin in 1916. The performances are not considered very good; it is possible that he was already suffering the effects of the syphilis that would claim his life, which may have caused the loss of dexterity and tremors noted in the piano rolls.

The Entertainer (1902), Scott Joplin

"The Entertainer" calls itself a ragtime version of the two-step, a dance style popular up until 1911. Although this rag did not enjoy the early popularity of "Maple Leaf Rag," it fared much better in the ragtime revival of the '70s, reaching #3 on the Billboard charts in 1974, on the heels of an Oscar awarded to lightly adapted versions of Joplin's rags in *The Sting*. It has been taken seriously by classical musicians, and its popular appeal is underscored by its use as a standard by ice cream trucks to attract children.

St. Louis Blues (1914), W.C. Handy

Our program ends with the great W.C. Handy. "St. Louis Blues," published in 1914, has proven to be a lasting jazz standard. It was one of the first songs to cross over from the realm of jazz and blues to more widespread popular success. As a result of its popularity, it inspired a new dance: the foxtrot.

The song itself is unusual. It begins with a tango section before moving on to the standard 12-bar blues. Handy writes about this in reflecting on the song's first public performance: "When St. Louis Blues was written the tango was in vogue. I tricked the dancers by arranging a tango introduction, breaking abruptly into a low-down blues. My eyes swept the floor anxiously, then suddenly I saw lightning strike. The dancers seemed electrified. Something within them came suddenly to life. An instinct that wanted so much to live, to fling its arms to spread joy, took them by the heels." (*Father of the Blues* pp. 99–100)

In the version of the song we will be playing today, you will hear this tango theme as an introduction, followed by a tuba solo over the blues changes, defined by muted trumpets and stopped horn. This is followed by another statement of the tango theme, now married to the blues (which continues to assert itself in piccolo trumpet interjections). The tango then yields once more to the blues, led by a typically complex trombone rhythmic passage. The horn leads a transition into a faster Dixieland feel, with which the song ends.

Upcoming Performances

Return to Penny Lane
Wednesday, September 11, 2013
The Spaceland Ballroom
Doors open at 7 pm, Music starts at 7:15 pm
295 Treadwell Ave., Hamden, CT
Tickets $8

Our Penny Lane concert last March was a big hit, and a lot of fun for us! We're revisiting the music of one of the greatest bands of all time in the more informal concert setting of The Space in Hamden. We've made some changes in the show and introduced a couple of new songs, so if you missed it the first time, this is your chance, and if you saw it before, come see the revamped version!

On Broadway
A Music at St. Mary's Series Concert
Sunday, October 13, 2013, 2:30 pm
St. Mary's Catholic Church
70 Gulf St., Milford, CT
Admission free

We return to the Music at St. Mary's concert series, and this time we are presenting beloved music from the Broadway stage. Featuring music from *Showboat, West Side Story,* Andrew Lloyd Webber, *Les Miserables,* and more, this show will be a delight for all ages.

If you enjoyed today's performance, please leave a review for us at *http://www.gigsalad.com/brass_new_haven*

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