

PRESS KIT

2011

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About American Century Music

American Century Music (ACM) is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to performing the orchestral, chamber and solo repertoire of 20th century American composers. ACM aims to bring greater exposure to this body of work and further cultural dialogue about the place of American composers and their work within the American Century and beyond.

Launched in 2010, ACM is uniquely designed to work with a wide array of musicians and institutions, presenting repertoire ranging from solo instrument to full orchestra. In its first season, ACM performed over 20 twenty works by a dozen composers from "The American Century," including Amy Beach, Charles Griffes, Walter Piston, Donald Martino, and Elliott Carter. ACM has given performances at the Boston Public Library and Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington DC, and the 2011/12 season will see the inauguration of ACM's first monthly concert series in Boston, collaborating with such ensembles and artists as the Lydian String Quartet, Claremont Trio, and violinist Curtis Macomber.

Iconic American publisher Henry Luce coined the phrase "The American Century" in a 1941 Life magazine editorial intended to wake the nation from its isolationism and to summon it to a new role among the world's leading nations. Now in the second decade of the 21st century, we have the perspective to see that much of what Henry Luce and others advocated during the 20th century about America's international role in fact came to fruition. Paraphrasing from Luce's essay, by the close of the 20th century Hollywood movies, American television, American slang, American machines and products were recognized in every community in the world.

What has never been examined in much depth, either at home or internationally, is America's art music. During the same period as the flourishing of American jazz, Hollywood, television and fast food, American composers writing music derived from European structural and theoretical models were composing major works for solo instruments, chamber ensemble, orchestra, chorus and opera, all of which would come to be recognized as containing an "American Voice."

The amount of repertoire from these composers is enormous and seldom heard. With over a hundred composers and multiple hundreds of compositions amongst them, ACM was created to fill a vacuum in America's cultural fabric by bringing these inspired, well-crafted works out of their obscurity with committed, insightful performances which they unquestionably deserve.

FACT SHEET

Mission

American Century Music (ACM) is dedicated to performing the works of 20th century American composers. ACM aims to bring greater exposure to this body of work and further cultural dialogue about the place of American composers and their work within the American Century and beyond.

Artistic and Executive Director

Scott Parkman is the founding Artistic and Executive Director of American Century Music.

Musicians

ACM works with a wide range of musicians based in the different locations where ACM performs. Included among the Musicians of American Century Music are top-tiered freelance musicians and conservatory graduates based in Boston, New York, and the Washington DC area. ACM also collaborates with esteemed chamber ensembles, including the Lydian String Quartet and the Claremont Trio.

ACM, Inc. and Nonprofit Status

American Century Music was incorporated in the State of Massachusetts on November 12, 2008, and received nonprofit, 501(c)(3) status from the IRS on January 27, 2009.

Funding

ACM's funding comes through a combination of performance fees, individual donors, grants, advertisement, and ticket sales.

2010/11 Highlights

ACM's first performing season began in June 2010, and included 5 different programs at the Boston Public Library. ACM also made its debut in Washington DC with a performance at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. In its first season ACM presented over 20 works by a dozen composers.

2011/12 First Church in Boston Series

In October 2011 ACM will inaugurate its first monthly series at First Church in Boston.

SCOTT PARKMAN

Conductor

Artistic and Executive Director, American Century Music

A conductor of remarkable versatility and exemplary musicianship, Scott Parkman is widely recognized for his engaging style and welcoming rapport with audiences. Mr. Parkman has established himself as an artist of depth and unique perspective.

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Mr. Parkman also has command over a large breadth of the traditional repertoire. During his tenure as Assistant Conductor of the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra (2003-2008), he led the orchestra in over 150 performances, including major works by Beethoven, Mozart, Schumann, Sibelius, Tchaikovsky, and Wagner. As an international guest conductor Mr. Parkman has led the New Zealand Symphony, Hong Kong New Art Camerata, and the Heidelberg Philharmonic Orchestra. In the United States his engagements include the Minnesota Orchestra, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Lubbock, and Oakland East Bay Symphonies, Oakland Ballet, and the Sacramento and Palo Alto Philharmonic Orchestras.

Active as an arts education advocate, Mr. Parkman speaks regularly with local and national officials, and was invited in 2006 to conduct a performance at the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts marking the return of music studies after Hurricane Katrina. He has conducted young musicians at the Queensland Conservatorium in Australia, the Hong Kong Summer Music Festival, and has appeared with numerous festival orchestras throughout the United States.

Scott Parkman studied percussion and conducting at the University of Michigan, graduating with highest honors under the auspices of the Artist and Scholar Honors Program. He continued studies in Italian language and culture in Bologna, Italy and conducting at the San Francisco Conservatory. In 2002 Mr. Parkman was the sole Conducting Fellow at the prestigious Tanglewood Music Center.

Mr. Parkman resides in Boston, Massachusetts. To learn more about Scott Parkman visit his website at www.scottparkman.com and www.americancenturymusic.org.

The Boston Globe

Found online at:

http://www.boston.com/ae/music/articles/2010/06/25/angus_named_boston_lyric_opera_director/

CLASSICAL NOTES

June 25, 2010

Giving voice to a century

The 20th century was, among many other things, the time when America finally got itself on the classical music map. There had, of course, been composers in America earlier, but it was only in the last century that the country produced not just a handful of composers largely beholden to their European colleagues for inspiration, but a great assembly of voices and factions offering different — and sometimes competing — visions of what American music was.

Despite the importance of this remarkable chapter in music history, conductor Scott Parkman thinks we haven't been listening closely enough. Parkman formed American Century Music last year out of a conviction that despite the lasting prominence of American art in some media — film, television, jazz — its art music has yet to be examined in any sustained depth. Under his direction, the organization intends to produce concerts devoted solely to 20th-century American music. Its first is today in the courtyard of the Boston Public Library.

Parkman was trained as both a conductor and a percussionist, and his training, he wrote in an email exchange, focused heavily on the core European repertoire. “However, I’ve been curious for some time as to why early and mid-20th century American composers’ music rarely appears in concert halls,” he wrote, mentioning William Schuman, Roger Sessions, David Diamond, and Walter Piston. “The repertoire by [these] composers is enormous, lots of it very good, and much of it underperformed.” It’s true that recordings and isolated performances of many of these pieces exist; however, Parkman wrote, “I’m more interested in live performance and putting together interesting programs that allow the different compositional voices of the century to communicate.”

As an example of that conversation, today’s concert is composed of wind music by New England composers, written between the early 1940s and the mid-1950s. Arthur Berger’s neoclassical Quartet for Winds sits in close proximity to the jazzy atonality of Donald Martino’s “A Set for Clarinet.” The program is rounded out by quintets by Walter Piston and Amy Beach.

American Century Music has no fixed roster of musicians, and, Parkman explained, is wedded to no particular musical format. Rather, he wrote, “it is designed to work with many different musicians as well as collaborate with established ensembles, orchestras, and performing arts centers. Thus, ACM has the capacity to perform the entire gamut of repertoire, with programs that can present a concert of a singular genre or those combining several different ones.”

If that sounds like an ambitious plan, consider that Parkman has already scheduled two more BPL concerts this summer — one featuring music of Piston, Elliott Carter, and George Antheil (July 16), the other composed of string quartets by Barber, Ives, and Arthur Foote (Aug. 20). A performance at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington is scheduled for Nov. 14. And Parkman hopes to expand the organization’s reach to include educational activities as well.

www.americancenturymusic.org

DAVID WEININGER

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The Boston Musical Intelligencer

a virtual journal and blog of the classical music scene in Boston

Robert Levin, editor; Bettina A. Norton, executive editor;

Lee Eiseman, publisher

Found online at: <http://classical-scene.com/2010/07/17/second-of-bpls/>

July 17, 2010

Second of ACM's BPL Noontime Courtyard Concerts Draws Motley Crowd

by Rebecca Marchand

American Century Music (ACM), an organization relatively new to the Boston music scene, gave the second of three concerts on Friday afternoon, July 16 at 12:30 pm, that they are contributing to Boston Public Library's "Concerts in the Courtyard Series." The free concert drew a motley lunchtime crowd on a very hot day — some were there by happenstance, others came to hear the ensemble, and still others came as regular attendees at the Courtyard Series, which began July 2 and features free lunch hour concerts every Friday through August 27.

ACM is dedicated to performing 20th-century American repertoire, and with this concert, entitled "An Eclectic Trio," offered three works by George Antheil, Elliott Carter, and Walter Piston. While Carter is well known to Boston audiences, particularly given his recent centenary celebrations, Antheil and Piston seemed to be more foreign, at least to the audience members with whom I spoke. Antheil's 1923 *Symphony for Five Instruments* displayed the talents of Thomas James Wible on flute, Adam Smith on bassoon, Kyle Spraker on trumpet, Keith Almanza on trombone, and Zoe Kemmerling on viola. The scoring, to be sure, is rather unusual, and comes from the pen of one of the more colorful characters in American music history. In addition to his self-described "bad boy" compositions, Antheil also collaborated on a torpedo guidance system with actress Hedy Lamarr and dabbled in topics as wide-ranging as female endocrinology and film music criticism. The *Symphony* premiered the year before his most famous work, *Ballet Mécanique*, and unlike the latter piece, is relatively conservative if unorthodox in its instrumentation. ACM's Artistic Director Scott Parkman remarked that the work, as was the fashion of other contemporary composers at the time, poked fun at existing forms. And while it is true that a five-member ensemble does not a symphony make, there are symphonic gestures and a sensitivity toward texture that suggest Antheil was not completely tongue-in-cheek in his chosen title for the piece.

Parkman admirably conducted the ensemble, gently negotiating the interesting presence of symphonic counterpoint in a chamber-music context. The ensemble playing was excellent throughout, particularly in the middle movement Largo, which calls for incredible sustained control from the wind and brass, punctuated by a light pizzicato in the viola. While the brass solos in the first movement seemed at times a bit unsure, this was smoothed out by their elegance in the Largo and the energized Stravinskian rhythms of the final movement Presto. Wible, in particular, offered tremendously lyrical and beautiful flute lines, highlighting Antheil's skill for melodic writing against the jaunty staccato motives of the trumpet in the first movement.

Elliott Carter's *Eight Etudes and A Fantasy for Woodwind Quartet* (1950) illustrated the immense talents of Wible and Smith again, in addition to Claire Cutting on oboe and Kevin Price on clarinet. The quartet played five of the eight etudes (I, III, IV, V and VI) and the Fantasy, exhibiting both the pedagogical and compositional value of the work. In the first etude (Maestoso), the ensemble had excellent and expressive focus on the sonorities created by the exploitation of each instrument's range. But it was the second etude, marked *Adagio possibile*, which was most marvelous. With an opening similar in emotional evocation to that of Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, the Adagio hints at the possibility of tonal blooming but never delivers, instead creating a delicious harmonic tension that was beautifully balanced by the quartet. In all of the etudes, in fact, the quartet had an explicit awareness of the parts as well as the whole, giving each of the etudes a significant and remarkable interpretation, but saving something for the Fantasy that throws all the material together. The seventh etude, *Allegretto leggero*, showcased Wible's facile flutter tonguing but also the intense energy that all four musicians brought to each note. In the extraordinary Fantasy, the ensemble had a tremendous sense of metric modulation, navigating seamlessly through the score in beautifully articulated fugal counterpoint. Here Adam Smith shone, delighting in the active participation of the bassoon. At some points the quartet's *sforzando* punches sacrificed tone, but they otherwise respected the compositional control and finesse in Carter's writing — even in a fantasy.

Walter Piston's *Divertimento for Nine Instruments* (1946) brought the concert to a close. In addition to being Carter's teacher, Piston was a very apropos addition to the program, given the composer's connection to the Boston Public Library; it houses over 2,000 items that belonged to Piston, including 25 manuscripts and holographs. Parkman set the stage for the piece by remarking that Piston was the "anti-Antheil." While this generality is true is most respects, the *Divertimento* shared the sympho-chamber qualities of the Antheil work. Capitalizing on the historic divertimento, the ensemble (comprised of the wind quartet and joined by Liza Zurlinden and Jae Young C. Lee on violins, Kemmerling on viola, Javier Caballero on cello, and Max Judelson on bass), delivered an exemplary performance of all three movements, but as with the Antheil, really illuminated the slow movement. Cutting's oboe solo and the gorgeous tone of Zurlinden's violin brought a poignant, mournful quality to Piston's "Tranquillo." The final Vivo was a celebration of 18th-century divertimento rhetoric in modern garb, with its sprightly bassoon figurations and the excellent work of Caballero and Judelson in the low strings. Parkman kept it dancing, even as the relentless Boston sun swallowed pockets of shade in the courtyard.

Parkman's expressed goal for ACM is to "examine and perform the hundreds of works by 20th-century American classical composers — music that is underrepresented on today's concert programs." After the concert, the gentleman sitting next to me asked the woman to his left, "Do you know Piston?" She shook her head. "I don't either," he continued. "This is the first I've heard him," he admitted, while clapping enthusiastically. Parkman and the ACM seem to understand that it isn't about presenting modern music for the sake of its modernity, but for its musicality. Their offering in the dignified piazza of the BPL on a hot and balmy Boston summer day declared hope for renewed dialogue and community for American 20th-century music.

Rebecca Marchand holds a Ph.D. in Musicology from the University of California, Santa Barbara and serves on the faculty of Longy School of Music and Boston Conservatory.

The Boston Musical Intelligencer

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Lee Eiseman, publisher

Found online at <http://classical-scene.com/2010/08/23/voyage/>

August 23, 2010

Voyage of Discovery Finds Less-Known Early-20th-Century American Works

by **Lee Eiseman**

American Century Music's Artistic Director Scott Parkman is on a voyage of discovery: to uncover in dusty archives those works by American composers of the first half of the 20th century that are deserving of revival by his young musician-recruits. ACM's local concerts have so far been in unconventional spaces. This summer a series of three took place in the courtyard of the Boston Public Library. On Sunday, August 21, a decommissioned barn at Newburyport's Maudsley Center for the Arts was the venue. The concert by a quintet of excellent Boston freelancers fielded by Parkman was, in fact, the first classical event presented there.

Originally intended to be outside in a concrete-walled patio, because of rain the performance was moved into an acoustically much more appropriate though rather long and height-challenged 1920s barn. Set up with green plastic tables and chairs for a Popsstyle food service, the room had rather pleasant acoustics, since it opened above the ceiling framing into a voluminous wooden truss space. Perhaps because this was the first classical music concert presented by The Maudsley, there was often some commotion in the background, such as movement of the food-service volunteers over the concrete floors and conversations just outside.

The performances by a string quartet of Gabriela Diaz and Omar Chen Guey, violins, Frank Shaw, viola, and Alexei Gonzales, cello were excellent for an *ad hoc* assemblage. Samuel Barber's *String Quartet, op. 11* got a stirring reading. The first movement's pulse never wavered, thanks to the dramatic leadership of first violinist Diaz, and the famous adagio was emotive without being maudlin, due both to her restraint and the unanimity of the ensemble.

Flautist Jessi Rosinski joined the quartet for Walter Piston's *Quintet for Flute and Strings*, a "wheels within wheels" neoclassical construct written for Doriot Anthony (later Dwyer) in 1942. It has a certain reflexive spikiness and a Copland-esque wrong-note lyricism. While the five players could not always provide the dramatic accents and

turn-on-a-dime risktaking of an established ensemble, their playing did show an estimable investment in the unfamiliar and difficult-to-pull-off music.

The *Nocturne and Scherzo for Flute and String Quartet* of Arthur Foote is a lovely trifle of gossamer exoticism without any disturbing storm or stress. We'd like to hear it again. Gershwin's familiar and much-transcribed *Lullaby for String Quartet* has no real destination, though the performance lent it very pleasant barcarolle-like quality (even though the piece is in 4) and a sense of a pleasant, reposeful journey. The closer was a road and brio performance of Ives's *String Quartet no. 1* "A Revival Service," a veritable plum pudding of hymns that deserved and received a grateful *Amen*.

Lee Eiseman is publisher of Boston Musical Intelligencer.

PAST PROGRAMS: June 2010-May 2011

June 25, 2010

Boston Connections:

Music for Solo and Chamber Winds

Music of Berger, Beach, Martino, and Piston

July 16, 2010

An Eclectic Trio:

Music of Antheil, Carter, and Piston

August 20, 2010

String Quartet Statements:

Music of Barber, Foote, and Ives

August 22, 2010

String Quartet Statements II:

Music of Barber, Foote, Piston, Gershwin, and Ives

November 14, 2010

Smithsonian American Art Museum

Norman Rockwell Program

Music of Piston, Griffes, Beach, Ives, and Copland

March 29, 2011

Lecture/Concert:

American Modernism and the Influence of Jazz

Music of Cowell, Carter, and Martino

April 19, 2011

Lecture/Concert:

Copland and the "Commando Unit" of the 1930-40s

Music of Copland, Thomson, and Piston

June 2010-August 2011

Repertoire performed by instrumentation

Conducted Ensembles

George Antheil (1900-1959)
Aaron Copland (1900-1990)
Charles Griffes (1884-1920)
Walter Piston (1894-1976)
Virgil Thomson (1896-1989)

Symphony for Five Instruments (1923)
Appalachian Spring Suite for 13 Instruments (1944)
Three Tone Pictures (1919) [orchestrated version]
Divertimento for Nine Instruments (1946)
Sonata da Chiesa (1926)

String Quartet

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)
Arthur Foote (1853-1937)
Charles Ives (1874-1954)
Walter Piston (1894-1976)
John Harbison (b. 1938)

String Quartet, op. 11 (1936)
Nocturne and Scherzo for Flute and String Quartet (1918)
String Quartet No. 1 "A Revival Service" (1896)
Quintet for Flute and String Quartet (1942)
String Quartet No. 2

Piano Trio

Amy Beach (1867-1944)

Piano Trio in A Minor, op. 150 (1938)

Wind Quartet/Quintet

Amy Beach (1867-1944)
Arthur Berger (1912-2003)
Elliott Carter (b. 1908)
Walter Piston (1894-1976)

Pastorale for winds, op. 151 (1941)
Quartet for Winds (1941)
Eight Etudes and a Fantasy for Woodwind Quintet (1950)
Quintet for Winds (1956)

Brass Ensemble

Bruce Adolphe (b.1955)
Leslie Bassett (b. 1923)
Ingolf Dahl (1912-1970)
Michael Tilson Thomas (b. 1944)

Desperate Measures (1982)
Brass Trio (1953)
Music for Brass Instruments (1944)
Street Song (1988)

Flute

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)
Arthur Foote (1853-1937)
Walter Piston (1894-1976)

Virgil Thomson (1896-1989)

Duo for Flute and Piano (1971)
Nocturne and Scherzo for Flute and String Quartet (1918)
Sonata for Flute and Piano (1930)
Quintet for Flute and String Quartet (1942)
Sonata for Flute Alone (1943)

Clarinet

Elliott Carter (b. 1908)
Henry Cowell (1897-1965)
Donald Martino (1931-2005)

Pastoral for Clarinet and Piano (1941)
Six Casual Developments for Clarinet and Piano (1933)
Set for Clarinet (1954)
Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (1951)

Viola

Vincent Persichetti (1915-1987)

Parable No. 16, op. 130 (1974)

PROJECT IDEAS

American Century Music is a unique and flexible organization designed to collaborate with a large range of musicians, ensembles, organizations, and institutions. ACM projects range from concerts for solo instrument to large orchestra, with budgets that vary according to a program's requirements.

Working with your budget and venue, ACM can design a program that will be exceptional.

Full-length Concert

Solos, duos, trios, quartets, quintets.... Repertoire comprised of practically every conceivable instrumentation exists from composers of The American Century. ACM has countless programs featuring works for 2, 3, 4 players or more. The cost of these full-length programs increase with the number of musicians involved, an average fee per musician ranging from \$500-700.

Regardless of your budget, an artistically vibrant and engaging program can be created and presented to your audience.

Lecture-Concert

This one-hour program features ACM Artistic Director Scott Parkman presenting a 15-minute lecture on a topic related to The American Century, followed by 2-3 pieces exemplifying the program's theme.

Cost range: \$700-1500

Art & Music

Museum galleries, auditoriums and foyers all provide interesting places to experience the synergy of America's visual art and music. ACM programs can be tailored to a museum's permanent collection and visiting exhibitions.

Residencies

ACM is available for university/conservatory residencies of many different varieties.