

Program Notes by Don Adkins

Sinfonia (2011)

Daniel Stewart (1981 – present)

Daniel Stewart is beginning his second year as music director of the Santa Cruz Symphony and is in his third year as conductor with the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. He has conducted orchestras and opera companies throughout the United States and Germany and has worked with several notable composers including Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Adams and Thomas Adès. Stewart has also played viola for many chamber groups and orchestras including the San Francisco Symphony and the New World Symphony. He earned a Bachelors of Music from the Indiana School of Music and a graduate degree in conducting from the Curtis Institute of Music.

Composers sometimes reveal the influences of other composers in their choice of styles or utilize popular music idioms in otherwise serious contexts. In the case of *Sinfonia*, there are several moments where influential composers are hinted at and different popular musical styles are called upon. The presence of ideas similar to other composers is usually not a conscious decision but, rather, a creative reprocessing of familiar musical voices. There are three moments of the inclusion of popular music that Stewart consciously included. A trumpet solo in the first movement invokes the soundtrack of a spaghetti Western. A clarinet solo near the end of the first movement is a nod to a typical jazz riff that sounds as if it came from a Benny Goodman swing piece. A high solo clarinet evokes an Argentinian tango in the middle of the last movement. This technique of including popular music in a more formal setting has been used as long as people have been making "serious" music. Even a composer as straight as J.S. Bach was contractually obligated to not use the more popular operatic style in his church music.

The composer wrote the following about *Sinfonia*:

"I wrote and scored my Sinfonia in a continuous three week period in December 2010, and conducted its premiere at the Aspen Music Festival in the summer of 2011. It is scored for two Flutes (2nd doubling Piccolo), Oboe, English Horn, Clarinet in Bb, Bass Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon, Contra Bassoon, four French Horns in F, two Trumpets in C, three Trombones, Tuba, Timpani, Percussion (Bass Drum, Cajon, Cuica, Cymbals, Guiro, Shaker, Woodblocks), Piano, Harp, and Strings.

"The first movement is a fantasia, originating out of the types of serendipitous syncopations that permeate our increasingly electric landscape. The next several episodes involve a series of event horizons, including a quasi-bacchanal, meditation, storm, and finally a catharsis, which leads the narrative towards a sense of heightened awareness.

"The second movement is a scherzo, with its main rondo-like substance in 6/8 + 7/4. It is

altogether playful in nature until a lyric middle section takes over. This ultimately develops into what will become the heart of the third movement. It ends in a joyful celebratory chorus. "The third and final movement was originally planned as the first movement. It begins from an invocation of a single note, heavy with unease. Its interlocutor is the motto-theme of the movement, a rising fourth, which gradually transcends its oppressive counterpoint and succeeds in transitioning into a lyrical serenade. This is followed by a relentless dance which eventually results in a cataclysm. Consolation and resolve bring about the final catharsis."