



PROGRAM NOTES

By Libby Larsen

FREDERICK LOEWE SYMPOSIUM ON AMERICAN MUSIC
THE MUSIC OF LIBBY LARSEN

STUDENT CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERT

Wednesday, October 28, 2015 - 8 p.m.
FREDERICK LOEWE PERFORMANCE HALL

Yellow Jersey (2004)

Libby Larsen
(b. 1950)

Matthew Dearie, clarinet
Rebecca Holzer, clarinet

My Candle Burns (2012)

text by Edna St. Vincent Millay
Jessica Bondy, voice
Philip Hoch, piano

Wait a Minute (2004)

And Another Thing (2012)

Kelsey Broersma, soprano saxophone
Nicolai Gervasi-Monarrez, alto saxophone
Manuel Perez, tenor saxophone
David Moreland, baritone saxophone

Rodeo Queen of Heaven (2010)

Kira Golombek, clarinet
Laura Evans, violin
Lucia Cahuantzi, cello
Tatyana Henk, piano

Yellow Jersey (2004)

Composed during the year between Lance Armstrong's fifth and sixth victories in the Tour de France, *Yellow Jersey* is a short wind sprint for two clarinets. I invented the form of the piece by imagining how the sprint might go:

Massed Start
Cadence I
Breakaway I
Cadence II
Breakaway II
Cadence to coast
Coast
Cadence III
Bonk

Glossary:

Bonk: To exercise to the point of depletion of the body's energy stores, leaving one extremely weak and giddy.

Breakaway: Suddenly riding away from a pack of racers, quickly enough that opponents cannot keep close enough to draft (i.e. riding close to another rider in order to avoid wind resistance).

Cadence: A pedaling rate, measured in revolutions per minute.

Coast: To ride without pedaling.

Massed-Start: A race in which competitors start at the time (as opposed to a time trial).

Yellow Jersey: The jersey worn by the current overall leader during the Tour de France.

My Candle Burns (2012)

*My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends,
It gives a lovely light.*

-Edna St. Vincent Millay

Dedicated to the loving memory of our sister and friend, Lillian Vesley Brooke 1916 – 2011, Milwaukee Alumane Chapter, Sigma Alpha Iota.

Lillian Brooke's friends chose Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "First Fig" as representative of her special joie de vivre. They said: "We thought that Lillian would have thought about the candle burning at both ends being about the usual, being active and busy. We thought that Lillian was outspoken but graciously so. Independent, forthright and with a good sense of humor. She had integrity and was a steady, intelligent, hard-working woman who was very proud of her voice and music." I know I would have liked her very much.

To capture the qualities her friends ascribed to her, I used two intervallic leaps of an octave (E-E and G-G) to suggest the two ends of the candle. To suggest the permanent impermanence of a candle flame, I based the harmonic motion on pedal tones of C-A-F, suggesting F major as the tonic, but realizing C major as the home key.

Rodeo Queen of Heaven (2010)

"Libby Larsen's *Rodeo Queen of Heaven*, inspired by a wooden sculpture of the Madonna and Child in rodeo outfits, ingeniously twists plainchant into jazz and country idioms."

— Anthony Burton, *BBC Music Magazine*

Wandering through the Denver Art Museum a year or so ago, I happened upon an exhibit of contemporary Western Art. Amidst paintings of vast June skies, western grass pastures, ranches dwarfed in their landscapes, cowboys and any number of familiar icons of the American West was a glass vitrine which housed a hand-carved wooden, hand-painted Santo, 26 1/2 by 9 1/2 by 8 1/2 inches. The image was a Madonna and Child dressed in Rodeo garb. I walked by at first. Then I walked by again. After my fifth pass I stopped, utterly arrested by the work Rodeo Reina del Cielo "Rodeo Queen of Heaven," by Arthur Lopez.

The Madonna, serene in her appearance, held the Child, also serene and worldly. Clearly the artist knew his subject. I thought that Lopez' audacity of dressing the

subject in Rodeo regalia and surrounding their heads with halos made of lariats had caught my eye—and it had—but what really speaks to me about this work that Lopez interprets Southwestern American culture through a Mexican Christian religious icon and comes up with an object (the Santo) which speaks volumes about who we are and what we are becoming.

It hit me where I live. As a child in Minneapolis, I was a typical Midwestern kid—except my grade school, Christ the King, was full of plaster Santos, and for eight years we read, wrote and sang Gregorian chant, often singing the In Festis B. Mariae Vrginis (Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary), a 12th century Gregorian mass, for the daily mass at our church.

The Rodeo Queen of Heaven (Rodeo Reina del Cielo) weaves fragments of this mass into the fabric of this one movement chamber work. I set about to create a raucous, fluid musical Santo—a partner to Arthur Lopez's work.

BIOGRAPHY

Libby Larsen, composer in residence

Libby Larsen (b. 24 December 1950, Wilmington, Delaware) is one of America's most performed living composers. She has created a catalogue of over 500 works spanning virtually every genre from intimate vocal and chamber music to massive orchestral works and over twelve operas. Grammy Award winning and widely recorded, including over fifty CDs of her work, she is constantly sought after for commissions and premieres by major artists, ensembles, and orchestras around the world, and has established a permanent place for her works in the concert repertory.

As a vigorous, articulate advocate for the music and musicians of our time, in 1973 Larsen co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum, now the American Composer's Forum. A former holder of the Papamarkou Chair at John W. Kluge Center of the Library of Congress, Larsen has also held residencies with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony, and the Colorado Symphony. Her career has been recognized with several awards including MIT's McDermott award, the Peabody Award, and the American Academy's Arts and Letters Award.

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