

PROGRAM NOTES  
By Robert Margo

As a classical instrument, the mandolin has its origins in the eighteenth century, but it was around the turn of the twentieth century that the instrument reached its zenith of popularity in the Old and New Worlds. By World War I interest in the mandolin had largely died out in America, but the instrument retained a passionate following in other countries, particularly in Europe and Japan. Beginning in the 1970s the United States has experienced a revival of interest in classical mandolin.

The contemporary American mandolin orchestra includes first and second mandolins (tuned like the violin), the mandola (viola), the mandocello (cello), the mandobass (string bass), and classical guitar as harmonic support. The European version is similar except that the octave mandola (a mandolin tuned one octave below the regular mandolin) often substitutes for the mandocello. European orchestras also generally use the traditional "bowlback" mandolin whereas American orchestras tend to use flat or carved back instruments that, in one way or another, are descended from instruments designed in the late nineteenth century by Orville Gibson.

The repertoire for mandolin orchestra includes both original works and arrangements. "Song of Japanese Autumn" by Yasuo Kuwahara (a virtuoso performer and one of the most important Japanese composers) is a certifiable classic, played by mandolin orchestras everywhere. Claudio Mandonico's "Music for Play" draws on contemporary musical idioms while Jose Luis Barroso's "Concierto de Media Luna" evokes a fiery Spanish atmosphere with allusions to flamenco harmonies and rhythms. Owen Hartford is the PMO's resident composer. His "Latin Sketches" blends popular idioms with formal structures. A stew of minimalism and bouncy rhythms permeate Owen Hartford's "Groove #1." Featuring soaring melodies and unusual harmonic modulations, Hartford's "Latin Sketches" was premiered in 2006. Mark Davis's homage to his pet cat has become one of the PMO's signature pieces. An Austrian composer who spent much of his creative life in Scotland, Hans Gal is only now beginning to garner widespread recognition for his large catalog of works, including several using mandolin family instruments and classical guitar such as his "Capriccio". The three galliards by John Dowland are taken from his collection of 1604, Lachrimae, or Seaven Teares Figured in Seaven Passionate Pavans, with Divers other Pavans, Galliards, and Almands, Set Forth for the Lute, Viols, or Violons, in Five Parts. The lute part is based on Dowland's original with ornamentation and divisions added on repeats. Juriaan Andriessen was a Dutch composer best known for his film and theatrical music. His Canzona #1 has become one of the most important new additions to the lyric repertoire for the mandolin in Europe. British composer Karl Jenkins' Palladio is well known to audiences in the U.S. for its use in holiday advertising campaign.

# Providence MANDOLIN Orchestra

Mark M. Davis, Director

Sunday, October 28, 2007  
8:00 PM

Mattapoissett Congregational Church

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Made possible in part by a grant from The  
D'Addario Foundation for the Performing Arts  
with support from J. D'Addario & Company, Inc.  
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and Planet Waves Accessories.



