

The Providence Mandolin Orchestra
Mark Davis, Director

Yale University
Sprague Memorial Hall
November 11, 2006
2:00 PM

Song of Japanese Autumn

Yasuo Kuwahara
(1946-2003)

Song for My Father

Clarice Assad

Concierto de Media Luna

Jose Luis Barroso

Recuerdos
Elegia
Danza

Program Notes

By Robert A. 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 Germany and Japan. Beginning in the 1970s the United States has experienced a revival of interest in classical mandolin, including the mandolin orchestra. The contemporary American mandolin orchestra is made up of sections of first and second mandolins (tuned in fifths like the violin), the tenor mandola (viola), the mandocello (cello), the mandobass (string bass), and classical guitar as harmonic support.

Yasuo Kuwahara was a virtuoso performer on mandolin and perhaps the most important Japanese composer for mandolin ensemble during the latter half of the twentieth century. While many of his pieces utilize extended techniques and unconventional harmonies, “Song of Japanese Autumn” is a more traditional romantic work in several contrasting sections, including a virtuosic cadenza, here performed by concertmaster Joshua Bell.

The Providence Mandolin Orchestra has longed maintained an active program of commissioning new works for mandolin ensemble. Clarice Assad is a composer, vocalist, and pianist living in New York City, and the daughter of the celebrated classical guitarist Sergio Assad. Ms. Assad has a lengthy catalog of vocal, piano, guitar, and orchestral works, including a violin concerto composed for and recorded by Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg. Commissioned for the Orchestra by Robert Margo and written in honor of Sergio Assad, “Song for My Father” is filled with the subtle harmonies and infectious rhythms of the composer’s native Brazil.

The final work on the program, Jose Luis Barroso’s “Concierto de Media Luna” was originally composed for an ensemble of bandurrias and laudes – instruments tuned in fourths but otherwise played like mandolin family instruments. Barroso’s music is Spanish to its core, with many explicit references to flamenco in its harmonic and rhythmic structure. His “Concierto” is

in three movements – a mysterious “Recuerdos” followed by a moving “Elegia”, and ending with a dynamic and fleet “Danza”.

The Providence Mandolin Orchestra was founded by the late Hibbard Perry in 1971. Since then it has become one of the leading American mandolin ensembles, with regular appearances throughout the Eastern United States, Canada, and Western Europe. With well over two hundred pieces in its repertoire, the Orchestra features a wide range of musical styles from Renaissance dances to Baroque concertos, turn-of-the-century nostalgia, and avant-garde expressions. The group’s unique tonality has inspired exciting new works by Clarice Assad, Will Ayton, Owen Hartford, Eva Kendrick, Barbara Kolb, Robert Martel, Michael Nix, Stephen Funk Pearson, Francine Trester, and many others. The Providence Mandolin Orchestra is under the direction of Mark Davis. Mr. Davis pursues an active career as a solo and ensemble performer, educator, and conductor. Mark Davis directs a multi-level guitar ensemble program at the Wheeler School in Providence RI.

All three works on today’s program are included on the Providence Mandolin Orchestra’s new recording, “Spectrum”.

The Providence Mandolin Orchestra gratefully acknowledges the support of the D’Addario Foundation.

Performers: The Providence Mandolin Orchestra

Director: Mark Davis

First Mandolin: Joshua Bell (concertmaster), Michael Cappelli, Yvette Cote, Robert Margo

Second Mandolin: Lynne Bell, Antonio Carlyon, Owen Hartford, Chang Lee, Lisa Topakian, Paul Wilde

Mandola: Steve Caddick, Mack Johnston, Will Melton, Gayle Raposa

Mandocello: Duane Golomb, Dan Moore, Matt Synder

Guitar: Mark Armstrong, Christine Chito, Eric Christensen, Beverly Davis

Bass: Gino Cicchetti, Dave Parr

Website: www.mandolin-orchestra.org