



Fiddling with Mads Tolling

Featuring

Mads Tolling, violin

Kathryn Crandell, Conduct the Orchestra winner

PROGRAM

Themes from *Silverado*

Bruce Broughton (1945–)

Kathryn Crandell, conductor

Begejstring (“Excitement”) for Violin and Orchestra

Mads Tolling (1980–)

I. Muligheder (“Possibilities”)

II. Forståelse (“Understanding”)

III. Jubel (“Jubilation”)

Mads Tolling, violin

Eric Garland, drum set

INTERMISSION

Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)

Missy Mazzoli (1980–)

Saturday Night Waltz from *Rodeo*

Aaron Copland (1900–1990)

Fiddling with Mads

Smooth Criminal

Uptown Funk

Lord of the Dance

Hoe-Down from *Rodeo*

Aaron Copland

April 14, 2024, 2:00 p.m. — Lesher Center for the Arts

SEASON SPONSORS: Patrick and Shirley Campbell Foundation, Jon and Karen Colonias, MM Israel 2011 Trust, Brian Nippa, George Rhinebeck Family Trust, Kathleen West and Rennie Walker

PROGRAM NOTES: Family Concert: Fiddling with Mads Tolling

Bruce Harold Broughton is an American orchestral composer of television, film, and video game scores and concert works. Over an extensive career, he has composed several highly acclaimed soundtracks, winning 10 Emmy Awards and an Oscar nomination in 1985 for his score for the movie *Silverado*. Although now a Hollywood mainstay—with more than a three-decade output of film scores—Broughton was all but unknown in the movie industry when he received an invitation to talk with director Lawrence Kasdan about a “big, Hollywood, traditional Western score.” *Silverado* was released at a time when the Western was in decline. Seeking to reintroduce the genre to audiences, Kasdan produced a grand take on the form. “If you look at *Silverado*, it’s basically the classical Western,” Broughton says. “It’s got a shoot-out. It’s got the good guy, the bad guy, the ranchers.” Using classic Western scores such as that of *The Magnificent Seven* as a guide, he produced a bold and brassy score described by Kyle MacMillan of Opus3 Artists as a “sweeping, exhilarating soundtrack that pulses with classic Western flavor yet has a distinctive sound all its own.” The Chicago Symphony Orchestra performed the soundtrack alongside a screening of the film on May 6, 1916, marking the score’s premiere presentation by a live orchestra.

Mads Tolling’s violin concerto *Begejstring* (“Excitement”), his first work for full orchestra, was commissioned in 2015 by the Oakland Symphony. The 22-minute “swing-like-you’ve-never-swung-before” composition integrates groove-based music with jazz, fiddle styles, and improvisation, with the solo and orchestra parts scored in a way that makes the orchestra a full participant in the work’s jazz idiom. (Although there is no improvisation by orchestra players, the concerto as a whole sounds very free and spontaneous.) The first movement, “Possibilities,” begins with quiet rising figures for harp, strings, and woodwinds. Then, while highlighting different instrument groups—with low-brass groove-based backbeat ostinatos, funky bassoon lines, and fugal string quartets—the movement acquires a jazzy, syncopated edge before reaching its peak with a challenge between the solo violin (with improvisations) and trumpet (it is scored) that gradually ascends to the movement’s end. The lush ballad-like second movement, “Understanding,” highlights the simplicity of a beautiful melody and its unhurried message of calm, serenity, and allure, with the intro’s “moaning blues line” in clarinet and violin planting the seed for things to come. Tolling notes that the third movement, “Jubilation,” is a “bit of a fiddle hoedown that crosses into boogie-woogie blues. All men on deck, senses heightened, watch out!” Also called a “hoedown with a twist,” the movement “shifts back and forth between country fiddling on an orchestral scale and the funky horn lines of the Tower of Power [an American R&B and funk-based band and horn group] variety.” In writing the concerto, Tolling faced the challenges involved in understanding how sound travels within a large group (the drums can be 50 feet away from a cello—a much greater distance than would be found within a quartet) and how a guitar riff peeling from a flute might sound. But, having climbed Mount Kilimanjaro with his father, he is one to accept the challenges that come his way. In 2017 he accepted a commission from the Pacific Chamber Orchestra to compose a second violin concerto, *Yggdrasil*, inspired by Norse mythology bedtime stories that were read aloud to him while he was growing up in Denmark.

American composer and pianist **Missy Mazzoli** grew up in a nonmusical family in a quiet Pennsylvania borough. Discovering classical music through public television and the local library, she declared at age 10 that she wanted to be a composer. She went on to receive a bachelor’s degree from Boston University’s College of Fine Arts and a master’s degree from the Yale School of Music in 2006 and studied at the Royal Conservatory of the Hague under a Fulbright Grant. Nominated for a Grammy in 2019, she has received critical acclaim for chamber, orchestral, and operatic works. She is currently on the faculty as composer-in-residence at the Bard College Conservatory of Music and was previously on the faculty of the Mannes College of Music in New York. From 2012 to 2015, she was a composer-in-residence at Opera Philadelphia and, in 2018, was named for a two-season term as the Mead composer-in-residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The recipient of multiple commissions, she has composed for the Metropolitan Opera, Washington National Opera, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Mazzoli also composed original works for the acclaimed TV series *Mozart in the Jungle*. She additionally maintains an active career as a pianist and keyboardist, performing frequently with the band Victoire—which has

PROGRAM NOTES: Fiddling with Mads Tolling, continued

played and recorded many of her compositions since she founded the group, in 2008. Commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, “**Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)**” was premiered in 2014 and expanded for full orchestra two years later. Described by Mazzoli as “music in the shape of a solar system, a collection of rococo loops that twist around each other within a larger orbit ... a piece that churns and rolls, that inches close to the listener only to leap away at breakneck speed,” the work opens with soft sonic mists that lead to music that taps the resources of a full orchestra, including glissandi in the strings that create brief shifts between consonance and dissonance, plus rattling snare drum riffs that burst through velvety tones like meteoric punctuation. Whimsical harmonicas in three keys (played by the brass and bassoon sections) produce wheezy tones that add a briefly human element to the ambience of outer space. Melodicas and organ join in to make the orchestra sound like a hurdy-gurdy “flung into space” (in the Middle Ages, *sinfonia* was the Italian name for the hurdy-gurdy, a stringed instrument that produces a sound similar to a bagpipe’s). Evoking the motion of planets weaving in and out of each other’s paths, the work has been described as “magical,” “haunting,” “energetic,” and “ethereal.”

Aaron Copland, described as “the Dean of American Composers,” was born in 1900 to a family of Russian Jewish immigrants in Brooklyn, New York. He started writing music at a young age and began composition lessons at age 15. At 21 he was the first American to study in Paris with the famed composition teacher Nadia Boulanger. Although he immersed himself in Europe’s musical avant-garde, he remained interested in jazz and Latin American music and, during the 1930s and 1940s, embraced the arts community’s interest in American folk elements and nationalism. Turning to a musical style that was more accessible to American audiences, he employed “perfect intervals” to create a sensation of wide-open spaces and simplicity. (He notes, “It was worth the effort to see if I couldn’t say what I had to say in the simplest possible way.”) *Rodeo*, Copland’s second “cowboy ballet” (the first being *Billy the Kid* in 1938) premiered to great success in 1942. It tells the story of a rambunctious cowgirl who swaps her cowboy boots for a dress to win the attention of a handsome but haughty head wrangler, only to finally opt for romance with a kindly champion roper. Copland later extracted four of the ballet’s five episodes for the symphonic suite *Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo* (“Buckaroo Holiday,” “Corral Nocturne,” “Saturday Night Waltz,” and “Hoe-Down”). Opening to the sound of fiddles tuning up, “**Saturday Night Waltz**” finds the cowgirl alone as everyone else pairs up at a dance. The main dance tune, introduced by the oboe, is based on a transcription of the folk tune “I Ride an Old Paint,” provided to Copland by choreographer Agnes de Mille, to which he added a syncopated accompaniment evoking the dual feeling of excited anticipation and loneliness. The episode, in which the cowgirl is finally approached by the champion roper, features Copland’s characteristic economy of sound through use of solo instruments instead of entire sections. “**Hoe-Down**” then opens with repeated vamps of the first bar of the folk tune “Bonaparte’s Retreat,” one of several folk tunes quoted in this final episode. The square dance tune “Miss McLeod’s Reel,” performed by various solo instruments, is also heard, as is the Irish theme “Gilderoy,” briefly introduced by the clarinet and the oboe. Building to the end, “Bonaparte’s Retreat” reappears in canon before a slower theme leads to the climactic kiss between the cowgirl and the roper. The whole orchestra stops for this moment before resuming in full swing with “Bonaparte’s Retreat,” ending the piece in a grand fanfare. Copland is credited with establishing the soundtrack of the American West—his scores for *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo*, as well as his music for the film *The Red Pony* evoke images of wide-open spaces and a rough-and-tumble frontier, and many film scores (including the score for *The Magnificent Seven*) have borrowed his sound. Although Copland himself never saw the West, his music still embodies something big, bold, and uniquely American.

The mission of the Diablo Symphony Orchestra is to enrich the lives and cultural climate of our community by performing a diverse repertoire of live classical music and making it accessible to our region’s diverse population. We foster the next generation of young musicians, provide educational programs, and offer performing opportunities to local musicians.

BIOGRAPHIES



Matilda Hofman is music director and conductor of the Diablo Symphony Orchestra as well as conductor-in-residence of the Empyrean Ensemble at UC Davis. She is also artistic director of the San Francisco-based Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, with which she has premiered several works, including several operas. California guest engagements include Festival Opera, the Fremont Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Ballet, the Sacramento Ballet, and Sierra Summer Festival. Hofman also serves as a cover conductor for the San Francisco Symphony. Committed to education, she initiated an outreach program with the DSO that includes ensemble performances in schools as well as family concerts. She has performed at the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain, as well as at the Salzburg Festival, Paris Autumn Festival, the Berliner Festspiele, Holland Festival, and Luzerne Festival. She has also conducted alongside Ingo Metzmacher in many performances of Luigi Nono's *Prometeo* and prepared Chorwerk Ruhr for its debut performance with the Berlin Philharmonic. She has worked with Ensemble Modern, SWR Symphonieorchester, Ensemble Recherche, Bochumer Symphoniker, and Kammerakademie Potsdam. She has served as a conducting fellow at the Aspen Music Festival and School and has received awards from the League of American Orchestras and the Conductors Guild of America. Hofman was guest conductor for the Oberlin Opera Theater's November 2021 production of George Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, featuring Oberlin Conservatory students in the Vocal Studies Division and the Oberlin Orchestra. She holds degrees from Cambridge University, the Royal Academy of Music, and the Eastman School of Music.



Mads Tolling was raised in Copenhagen, Denmark, where he was classically trained as a violinist but additionally developed a strong interest in jazz, rock, and fusion musical traditions. His father played the saxophone, “just for fun,” and his mother had a passion for classical music, especially opera, each influencing his musical growth. He began playing the violin at age 6 with the Suzuki method. At age 11, he began studies with the Danish classical violinist, concertmaster, and conservatory professor Peder Elbeck. Noting his “natural tendency to swing,” Tolling remembers tapping his foot while playing Vivaldi as a young teen “to feel the rhythm.” While at Copenhagen’s musically oriented Sankt Annae High School, he was increasingly drawn into the world of Miles Davis, Danish jazz violinist Kristian Jorgensen, the Beatles, Paul Simon, and others. Under a scholarship, he then attended Berklee College of Music in Boston, known for the study of jazz and modern American music. There he studied with jazz pianist and music educator JoAnne Brackeen, jazz trombonist Hall Crook, and jazz saxophonist Joe Lovano and met and jammed with French jazz violinist Jean-Luc Ponty, who, in turn, recommended that Tolling join bassist Stanley Clarke’s band. Tolling has since performed more than 100 concerts with Clarke worldwide. He graduated summa cum laude from Berklee in 2003 and began a career writing for string quartets, chamber music groups, jazz combos, and even big band, also performing jazz, rock, fusion, and even Danish folk music on the violin. He has twice been commissioned to write violin concerti and has performed his symphonic works and soloed with orchestras around the United States and Japan. Tolling was a member of the pioneering string group Turtle Island Quartet for nine years, beginning in 2003; with the quartet, he won two Grammy Awards for Best Classical Cross-over Album. He has been featured on NPR’s Morning Edition, and his recordings have received rave reviews in the *Washington Post*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Strings Magazine*, and *DownBeat Magazine*. Since 2021 Tolling has toured across the United States with Bob Weir and the Wolf Bros. as a member of the Wolf Pack, including at Red Rocks, the Greek Theatre, and Radio City Music Hall. He is featured on Weir’s 2022 album *Live in Colorado* and has written arrangements of Grateful Dead tunes for the band, some of which are also played by Mads Tolling & the Mads Men, a group he founded in 2015. Their release *Playing the 60s* is a reimagination of classic songs from 1960s film, TV, and radio, such as “A Taste of Honey,” Hawaii 5-0,” and “Mission: Impossible.” Tolling also leads the Mads Tolling Quartet—consisting of violin, guitar, bass, and drums—founded in 2009, and, as a featured Yamaha Artist, leads clinics and master classes in the United States and internationally. Alone and with his groups, Tolling has performed more than a thousand concerts around the world, including at the Hollywood Bowl, the Newport Jazz Festival, and the Library of Congress as well as for Danish royalty at the Danish embassy’s 50-year anniversary celebration in Washington, D.C.

Contact the DSO at info@diablosymphony.org.

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