

November 5, 2013

**The U.S. Premiere of
Justin Dello Joio's opera BLUE MOUNTAIN,
the tale of the last days of Norwegian composer
Edvard Grieg, takes place at the
University of Connecticut, Storrs.**

**Friday, November 21, 2013, 8:00 PM at
von der Mehden Recital Hall**

**The School of Fine Arts, Maestro Jeffrey Renshaw,
University of Connecticut Wind Ensemble, and opera
department present the first performance of this
chamber opera outside of Norway.**

Storrs, Connecticut (November 5, 2013) – Blue Mountain, a chamber opera in one act, for four voices, and 33 instruments, will have its U.S. premiere at the University of Connecticut's von der Mehden Recital Hall on Friday, November 21, 2013 at 8:00 PM. This will mark the opera's first performance outside of Norway, where it was commissioned in 2008 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Edvard Grieg's death.

Composer **Justin Dello Joio** and librettist **A Boyle** create a haunting tribute to the last days of leading Norwegian Romantic composer, Edvard Grieg. The compelling life of Grieg unfolds through his own account and through the perspectives of his wife, his doctor, and composer Percy Grainger. Fanfare Magazine says, "This one act opera is an impressive piece of work."

Under the direction of Maestro Jeffery Renshaw, the cast includes: Meghan Ryan (Nina Grieg, Mezzo soprano); Spencer Hamlin (Percy Grainger, Tenor); Ryan Burns (Doctor Rossing, Baritone); Tony Leathem (Edvard Grieg, Bass).

The opera was originally commissioned by Det Norske Blaseensemble and The Bergen International Festival.

It premiered at The Ultima Music Festival and later recorded and released by Bridge Music in 2008.

The evening's program will begin with Percy Grainger's *The Duke of Marlborough Fanfare*, which was dedicated to Edvard Grieg by the composer.

Calendar Listing/Ticket Information

Blue Mountain, the U.S. premiere of a chamber opera in one act November 21, 2013 at 8:00 pm

University of Connecticut
von der Mehden Recital Hall
875 Coventry Road, Storrs, CT 06269
860-486-2969

\$10 tickets available on the day of the event, free for students and children

Box Office opens at 7:00 pm

Free parking is available in UConn lots adjacent to the recital hall.

For more information please visit: sfa.uconn.edu

Biographies

Meghan Ryan (Nina Grieg) *mezzo soprano*, received her Bachelor of Music vocal performance degree from Boston University. She participated in the early music and opera departments, working with voice teacher Frank Kelley and coaches Sharon Daniels and Martin Pearlman. She attended the *Florence Voice Program* where she studied with Laura Brooks-Rice.

Meghan's previous roles include Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Meg March in *Little Women*, and 3rd Woman in *Die Zauberflote*. Upcoming roles include Nancy in *Albert Herring* and Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with the University of Connecticut's Opera Theater. She will also be performing Berio's *Folk Songs* with the Hartford Independent Chamber Orchestra and the mezzo soprano solos for Schubert's *Magnificat* with the UConn Concert Choir.

Spenser Hamlin (Percy Grainger) tenor, is a Performers Certificate student at the University of Connecticut studying under Dr. Constance Rock. Spencer received 1st place in the College II Division of last year's Connecticut NATS Competition. He has appeared as a soloist with the UConn Concert Choir and the Vernon Chorale. He currently sings with Voce. While at UConn Spencer's roles have included Tamino in

Magic Flute, Judge Danforth in *The Crucible*, Fritz (cover) in *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein*, and Dr. Blind in *Die Fledermaus*. He also sang the role of Laurie in *Little Women* with Hartford Opera Theater. Spencer's upcoming roles include the title role in *Albert Herring* and the Count of Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville*.

Ryan F. Burns (Doctor Rossing) baritone, recently made his Connecticut Lyric Opera debut in *Don Giovanni* as Masetto. In 2014, Ryan will perform the roles of Sid in *Albert Herring* and Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with UConn Opera Theater. This past summer, Ryan sang the baritone solos in the *Faure Requiem* with the Pioneer Valley Symphony, as part of their "Summer Sing" Series and was selected as a finalist, for the second year in a row, in Connecticut Concert Opera's "American Opera Idol Competition."

Anthony Leathem (Edvard Grieg) bass-baritone, holds a Master of Music in Vocal Pedagogy from the New England Conservatory where he was the recipient of the prestigious John Moriarty Presidential Scholarship. This fall Mr. Leathem will be appearing as the baritone soloist for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the UConn Symphony Orchestra. While at the NEC, Mr. Leathem performed numerous roles including Sam in Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, Dr. Bartolo in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Il Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* as well as participating in the school's art song recital series, Liederabend. Mr. Leathem is currently pursuing a Doctorate of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance at the University of Connecticut studying under Dr. Constance Rock.

Jeffery Renshaw (conductor) is acclaimed by critics as a conductor whose performances are "both atmospheric and incisive; tender and gentle and simply beautiful; refreshes the senses," and is respected worldwide for his dynamic interpretations and extensive command of wind ensemble and contemporary repertoire. His ability to bring out vibrant colors and textures in a wide-range of works, coupled with his expertise in 20th and 21st century music, have earned him a strong following internationally as a conductor, pedagogue, arranger and author. He received his Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in conducting from the Eastman School of Music. His 1993 appointment as wind ensemble conductor at the University of Connecticut followed a position at the Eastman School of Music as Assistant Professor of Conducting and Ensemble Coordinator.

As a champion of new music, he has conducted over 60 world premieres with new music ensembles, wind ensembles and orchestras. In 1996, at the request of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, Dr. Renshaw and the University Wind Ensemble performed at Carnegie Hall to a standing room only audience of the nation's musical elite in a Tribute to Morton Gould. The Wind

Ensemble and Chamber Orchestra returned to Carnegie Hall in the Fall of 2005 with an evening of new works commissioned by Dr. Raymond and Beverly Sackler.

Dr. Renshaw has published over 30 articles about conducting and repertoire published in professional journals and his book on the American Wind Symphony commissions is required reading in most graduate and undergraduate conducting and repertoire courses. An accomplished arranger, his music has been recorded by the Eastman Wind Ensemble on the CBS/Sony Masterworks label and is published by Ludwig Music Publishers and Counterpoint Music Publishing. Performances of his ensembles and arrangements have been broadcast throughout Europe, Australia, Japan, the Netherlands and in the United States on National Public Radio's "Performance Today" and WGBH Boston's "Art of the States."

Students from his conducting studio have won conducting positions in wind bands and orchestras at colleges, universities, conservatories and professional ensembles throughout the United States and Europe. At the University of Connecticut he is Professor of Conducting, conductor of the University Wind Ensemble, Symphony Orchestra from 1996-2011, Artistic Director of the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Prize in Composition, Chair of Conducting and Ensembles, and teaches undergraduate and graduate conducting.

Justin Dello Joio (composer), born in New York City, is descended from seven generations of composers in the Dello Joio family. He began piano at age 5, studying with pianists Constance Keene and Mieczeslav Munz, began composing at age 6, winning a scholarship to the Juilliard Pre College at age 7. At age 12, he began studying with composer, Ellen Taafe Zwilich and in high school, with Hall Overton and jazz pianist Roland Hanna. He finished his formal training at the Juilliard School, receiving an annual composition award, while completing a B.M., M.M., and D.M.A. degrees in composition, studying with Vincent Persichetti, Roger Sessions, and David Diamond.

Dello Joio, currently published by Theodore Presser Co. and G. Schirmer, has composed orchestral, chamber, vocal, opera, and solo works, as well as music for chamber orchestra, and his work has been heard in the US, Europe, Taiwan and Korea. He has been the recipient of several awards: three from The American Academy of Arts and Letters, including their Award in Music, a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts, NY State Council on the Arts, Aaron Copland Recording Foundation, NY Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, 2 Meet the Composer grants, The American Music Center CAP award, and the Theodore Presser Foundation. On October 31, 2007, The Classical Recording Foundation awarded him their Composer of the Year Award at Weill/Carnegie Hall.