

Performance

Section Overview

Although Ford Made in America is more than just the performance of one piece, the central element in your project experience will be the performance of Joseph Schwantner's *Chasing Light*....

In this section we'll explore some activities to enrich the musicians' work on the piece, programming the work, and of course, the performance itself.

A reminder, again, of the tools you have at your disposal:

Joseph Schwantner Tools

Biography
Photo (on web site only)
Press Quotes
Discography
Program Note

Program Tools

General Project Description
Key Messages
List of Premieres
National Press Release
Local Press Release

Multimedia Tools

Web site and Internet
Score and demo recording
DVD (and transcript)
CD (and transcript)

Activity 1: Programming *Chasing Light...*

Goals Provide context and understanding to the new work

Tools needed Discography
DVD
CD
Demo recording

Procedure

Review the discography of composer Joseph Schwantner's recorded repertoire, and familiarize yourself with his music. Watch the DVD interview and listen to the CD (or read the transcript) to gain an understanding of the background behind *Chasing Light...* Listen to the demo recording of the work, as well.

Schwantner has provided a list of pieces that provide a context for further understanding *Chasing Light...*:

George Crumb: *Vox Balaenae (Voice of the Whale)*
Béla Bartók: Music for Strings, Percussion & Celeste
Oliver Messiaen: *Quartet for the End of Time*
Henryk Górecki: Symphony #3, (*Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*)

He has also suggested pieces that may be programmed alongside *Chasing Light...*:

Joseph Schwantner: *New Morning for the World* (for narrator and orchestra)
Joseph Schwantner: *From Afar...* (fantasy for guitar and chamber orchestra)
Joseph Schwantner: *A Play of Shadows* (for flute and chamber orchestra)
Samuel Barber: *Adagio for Strings*
Béla Bartók: Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste
Witold Lutoslawski: *Funeral Music*
Igor Stravinsky: *Dumbarton Oaks*
Richard Wagner: *Siegfried Idyll* (originally for a 15 piece orchestra)
Arnold Schoenberg: Chamber Symphony No. 1
Alban Berg: Chamber Concerto
Aaron Copland: *Appalachian Spring*
Sergei Prokofiev: Classical Symphony

Assessment

Which pieces did you program alongside *Chasing Light...*? What insight did you gain?

Did the audience appreciate the relationship among the various works on the program? Had they heard Schwantner's work before (perhaps on the radio, as in Activity 4 of the Promotion section)?

Extensions and variations

Use *Chasing Light...* as the focus for a larger festival of new work. Tie the piece in with a chamber music recital and master classes (especially at university orchestras).

Pair *Chasing Light...* with an earlier, more familiar piece of music, creating a “music bridge” between the two works.

Perform the fourth movement of *Chasing Light...* as an encore to the performance. It recaps most of the main themes from the entire piece.

Activity 2: On concert night

Goals Heighten the enjoyment of the performance of *Chasing Light...*
Create awareness of the Ford Made in America project

Tools DVD
Score

Procedure

At a pre-concert event or lecture, set up the DVD so that it may be played alongside the presenter of the event. The presenter (perhaps even the conductor) can speak about the piece, while talking about the project and fielding questions from the audience in an interactive format.

If you don't typically have pre-concert events, set up the DVD on a monitor in the lobby of the performance venue, and have it run continuously.

If you have the capability to project video and audio throughout the concert hall, then during the concert, immediately prior to the piece, show these chapters:

- Chapters 6 and 7 ("Poetry and *Chasing Light...*" and "Closing Thoughts on *Chasing Light...*") introduce the commissioned work from the composer's perspective, including a recitation of his original poem "Chasing Light..."
- The "A Word to the Audience" segment is a direct, 30-second thank-you from Schwantner to the audience.

Tip: If you don't have video projection equipment, but you do have audio playback capabilities, you can still do this activity by using the tracks on the CD.

Of course, if Joseph Schwantner is actually present at your performance of *Chasing Light...*, then you will want to have him speak live instead of playing the CD!

Conclude the presentations by mentioning the Ford Made in America web site, and encourage the audience to visit www.FordMadeinAmerica.org and post their comments and reactions to the piece on Joe's blog.

Assessment

Did the audience appreciate hearing from the composer? What difference did hearing the poetry make to the audience's comprehension of the music?

Was there any "wow" factor from seeing the composer on the DVD? Did it create any additional anticipation or interest in the work?

Did the audience visit www.FordMadeinAmerica.org and post their comments and reactions to the piece on Joe's blog? What were their comments?

Extensions and variations

Instead of (or in addition to) a pre-concert event, open the final rehearsal of *Chasing Light...* to the public, either for free or at a discounted price from a concert ticket. During a break in the rehearsal, have the conductor (and Schwantner, if he is present) explain the work to the audience. Use the DVD as well.

Have the orchestra play short excerpts from the piece demonstrating the main themes in the piece, with commentary from your conductor. You can use the musical excerpts in chapters 8-11 of the DVD as a guide to the important material in *Chasing Light...* This would require some advance planning on the part of the conductor, orchestra, and librarian to mark the parts and provide a cue sheet. You will probably want to rehearse the excerpts independently as well.

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Like many other concepts in this tool kit, the idea of playing excerpts ahead of the actual performance came from several orchestras in the consortium. One executive director remarked: "In our last experience, the composer came out first and

spoke briefly about how he conceived the piece. The orchestra played short bits of the piece demonstrating those points. It made all the difference in listening for the audience. They were so appreciative of that."

If your orchestra completed Activity 1 ("Using poetry as inspiration") in the education section, and your students have composed pieces based on the poem "Chasing Light...", perform these pieces during the pre-concert event or even during the concert itself.

Similarly, you could display examples of artwork or other poems inspired by "Chasing Light..." in the lobby of your venue.

Activity 3: Musician engagement

Goals Stronger connection to the music
Awareness of the Ford Made in America project
Better rehearsals and performances of *Chasing Light...*

Tools needed Web site
Score
Demo recording
Biography
Program note
DVD

Procedure

At the beginning of the season in which *Chasing Light...* is to be performed, announce the project to the musicians. Key points to include are:

- Your orchestra performing the state premiere of the work (if applicable)
- The national scope of the project
- The extra resources available with this project

Follow the announcement with an e-mail to your musicians, including a brief description of the program and a link to www.FordMadeinAmerica.org. Provide musicians with the link to download the score and the demo recording of the work.

When rehearsals for the piece begin, send a reminder e-mail with the above links.

At the first rehearsal, distribute the Schwantner biography and *Chasing Light...* program notes in the music folders.

Before rehearsal begins, play the segment of the DVD entitled “A Word to Musicians,” which features Schwantner thanking the musicians for their efforts.

During rehearsal, play chapters 8-11 of the DVD, “Musical Excerpts,” and incorporate the techniques into the rehearsal.

After the performances, encourage musicians to provide feedback about the work and to post on the blog.

Assessment

What was the feedback from the musicians?

Was there a stronger connection to the music relative to other works that your orchestra performs? If so, will you include a composer bio and program note in the music folders for all the contemporary music you perform?

Did the musicians visit the web site and/or blog? Were they aware of the project?

Were the tools (DVD, web site, demo) helpful in rehearsing the work?

Extensions and variations

Play other chapters from the DVD during rehearsal breaks, or arrange a viewing during lunchtime.

Invite musicians to participate in pre-concert discussions about the work, including demonstrations of excerpts from the piece.

Conclusion

As in the promotion section, there are many other possible activities besides the ones described in this section. If you find yourself using the tools in other ways that develop into new activities, please share your achievements with your colleagues in the consortium, and contact the Ford Made in America program staff.

Joseph Schwantner has a strong following in colleges and universities. Many school orchestras and wind ensembles have played and recorded his music, and quite a few students and faculty members know him personally. Contact your local schools to see if there is a “Schwantner connection,” and see if there is interest in performing his music on campus to tie into your performance of *Chasing Light...*

A reminder that any questions regarding the parts, perusal or performance scores to *Chasing Light...* should be directed to European American Music. Contact information is found on page 80.