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February 2009

## Solo Composition Recital (February 17, 2009)

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO DEPARTMENT OF

# Music

## Faculty Recital Series

**Dominic Dousa, composer/piano**

*with Guest Artists*

**Renée Skerik, viola**

**Texas Tech University**

*and*

**The Texas Tech University Viola Choir**

**Everaldo Martínez, director**

Tuesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
Fox Fine Arts Recital Hall / 7:30pm

## PROGRAM

*Sonata No. 1 for Viola and Piano, Op. 240*  
(on "unedited anonymous themes from the 18<sup>th</sup> century")

Darius Milhaud (1892-1974)

- I. *Entrée*
- II. *Française*
- III. *Air*
- IV. *Final*

*Two Pieces for Viola Choir*

Dominic Dousa (b. 1973)

- I. *Spring Song from the Valley*
- II. *Dance*

*(Premiere performance)*

Texas Tech University Viola Choir  
Everaldo Martínez, director

Hailey Hatcher, David Preston, Juan Hernandez,  
Jason Bennett, Kevin Behlmann, Brett Osburne,  
Travis Golla, Sawyer Simpkins

*(from the studio of Renée Skerik, Texas Tech University)*

*Mountain Song*

## INTERMISSION

*Sonata for Viola and Piano, "From a Land Wild and Free"*

Dominic Dousa

- I. *Risoluto*
- II. *A Voice Calls in the Wilderness*
- III. *Molto vivace*

*(Premiere performance)*

Renée Skerik, viola  
Dominic Dousa, piano

## PROGRAM NOTES

*Sonata No. 1 for Viola and Piano*, Op. 240  
Composed February 1944; Oakland, CA  
Performance time: Approximately 14 minutes

Darius Milhaud

Darius Milhaud was one of the most prolific 20<sup>th</sup>-century composers. As a Jew, he fled his native France at the onset of World War II and secured a teaching position at Mills College in Oakland, California. It was there, exiled in a time of worldwide crisis, that he produced the cheerful and humor-filled first sonata for viola and piano. The work carries the curious subtitle “on unedited and anonymous themes from the 18<sup>th</sup> century”, though the exact source of those themes remains a mystery. According to Milhaud’s wife Madeleine (in a personal communication to University of Florida faculty violist Kenneth Martinson), he found these tunes at a library in his homeland in Aix-en-Provence. However, the quirky melodic and harmonic twists make one wonder if Milhaud came up with these tunes himself and placed the reference to reflect the general style of the melodies. Whatever the case, the music has a sense of old-time charm cloaked in a distinctly 20<sup>th</sup>-century style. Two slower movements, the graceful *Entrée* and the sweet and lovely *Air*, alternate with busier movements, the *Française* and *Final*, characterized by the motoric rhythmic drive of what might be termed a neobaroque style. Sometimes, especially in these fast movements, the two instruments play their parts seemingly without regard to the other; yet Milhaud usually keeps both parts in the same key, creating a blurred, but not harshly dissonant effect (with the exception of occasional humorously intentional ‘wrong’ notes). Perhaps it is as if two children, sometimes in concert and sometimes oblivious to, but never annoyed with, one another, innocently and energetically go on playing. Overall, the sonata aptly reflects Milhaud’s jolly and spirited personality, which, despite the difficult geopolitical circumstances in which the piece was written, cheerfully shines through.

*Two Pieces for Viola Choir*  
Composed March-May 2008; Santa Teresa, NM  
Performance time: Approximately 8 minutes

Dominic Dousa

This short set of two pieces was composed shortly after a performance Renée and I had given at a professional conference in Santa Barbara, California. Basking in the success of our presentation, we mused about our next collaborative project. Renée asked me to write a work for her viola choir at Texas Tech University, and I was happy to oblige. Before returning to El Paso, I took a short day trip through the mountain valleys near Santa Barbara. The lovely springtime weather and verdant landscapes inspired the melody that became the basis for the first movement, *Spring Song from the Valley*. Complementing this tuneful first piece is a rhythmically vivacious dance to close out the set.

*Mountain Song*

Dominic Dousa

Composed March, May 2007; Santa Teresa, NM

Performance time: Approximately 10 minutes

In March of 2007, after giving a presentation at a professional conference in the Denver area, I had the chance to spend one day in the Rocky Mountains west of town before heading back to El Paso. With its crisp air, brilliant sun shining on a snow-covered landscape, and majestic 14000-foot peaks in the surrounding areas, this setting provided the inspiration for *Mountain Song*. On that relaxed afternoon, I leisurely hiked some trails in the area, stopping along the way just to sit and admire the vistas, listen to the sounds of nature, and contemplate the beauty around me and the wonder of life itself. In *Mountain Song*, I hope to convey some of the moods of that spring day in the mountains.

*Sonata for Viola and Piano, "From a Land Wild and Free"*

Dominic Dousa

Composed July, November-December 2008; Rochester, MN / Santa Teresa, NM

Performance time: Approximately 32 minutes

While much of this sonata was composed during the last year, I began to sketch the ideas and themes that would become part of this piece as early as the summer of 2004, when I moved from Minnesota to El Paso. The trek to the southwest took me across the Great Plains, a land whose spirit continues to captivate me. Particularly striking are the landscapes traveling west across the plains of the Texas panhandle, where the grasslands become more barren and windswept. Even though much of the land itself has long been tamed by the plow, its isolation, the grandeur of its wide-open spaces, and the long distances between prominent landmarks and towns, inspire in me awe and a sense of adventure when I when I travel across it.

It is this spirit that animates the sonata "From a Land Wild and Free". The opening theme of the first movement begins with a fanfare-like motive, expressing the excitement of facing this grand, but sometimes harsh and forbidding land with a confident, pioneer spirit. Themes marked by this raw energy alternate with sections that are more reflective in tone, within the general framework of traditional sonata form. The material for the opening and closing recitative-like sections of the second movement came to me while gazing at a night sky in the Sacramento Mountains of New Mexico. It is as if one's thoughts are stirred with visions eager for expression, though all one has for an audience is the wide open land. The middle section of the movement features melodies that are lyrical and passionate, but with a darker and more introspective tone. A constant whirling energy characterizes the final movement, like the swirling wind blowing across the plains, animating a land, wild and free.

Program notes by Dominic Dousa.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Renée Skerik**, professor of viola at Texas Tech University and violist of the Botticelli String Quartet since 2004, has led an active and varied musical career. As a member of the Botticelli Quartet, she has toured throughout the United States, Europe, and Brazil, and was a featured performer at the 33<sup>rd</sup> International Viola Congress in Reykjavik, Iceland. Most recently the quartet presented a concert of Teresa LaVelle's compositions in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. In May of 2006, Skerik taught and performed at the "Cuerdes de Enlace" festival in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. For ten years, she performed as violist of the Artaria String Quartet, winners of the 2004-2005 McKnight Foundation Award for Performing Artists. Skerik is a four-time recipient of the prestigious Orchestral Fellowship at the Aspen Music Festival, and has performed in the Spoleto, New Mexico, and National Repertory Orchestras. Her chamber music collaborations include performances with Janos Starker, Raphael Hillyer, Arnold Steinhardt and Charles Castleman.

Skerik has served on the faculty of the MacPhail Center for the Arts, Carleton College, and The Quartet Program at SUNY Fredonia, and was Artist/Teacher for two summers at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute. She holds degrees from the University of Michigan (M.M.) and the Eastman School of Music (B.M.). Her primary teachers include Heidi Castleman, Jeffrey Irvine, Yizhak Schotten, Ellen Rose, and Corey Konkol.

**Dominic Dousa**, a native of Rochester, Minnesota, has been a member of the faculty of the University of Texas at El Paso Department of Music since August of 2004. There he has taught courses in 2<sup>nd</sup>-year theory and aural skills, seminars on specialized topics in theory, and all levels of composition. Before coming to UTEP, Dr. Dousa held teaching positions at St. Mary's University in Winona, MN (aural skills, music appreciation) and Rochester (MN) Community and Technical College (business & economic statistics). He holds degrees in music from Ball State University (D.A.), Central Michigan University (M.M.), and Harvard University (A.B. *summa cum laude*) and in statistics from Iowa State University (M.S.). He also has studied composition in Prague. His primary composition teachers include Jody Nagel, David Gillingham, Craig Weston, and Milan Slavický.

Dousa's compositions have received performances at recitals, festivals, and conferences in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Peru, China, France, Finland, and the Czech Republic. Two of his song cycles, *With a Song in My Heart* and *Six Songs on the Poetry of Langston Hughes* are available on the CD "With a Song in My Heart" by Blue Griffin Recording. This CD features art songs set to texts of African American poets. He has works published by Dorn Publications and TRN Music Publisher, and upcoming publications with Classical Vocal Reprints.

In addition to his activities as teacher and composer, Dousa has remained active as an accompanist and chamber musician. He has performed in numerous recitals at various universities with faculty, guest artists, and students and served as an official accompanist for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual International Singing Competition in Trujillo, Peru in August of 2000.

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