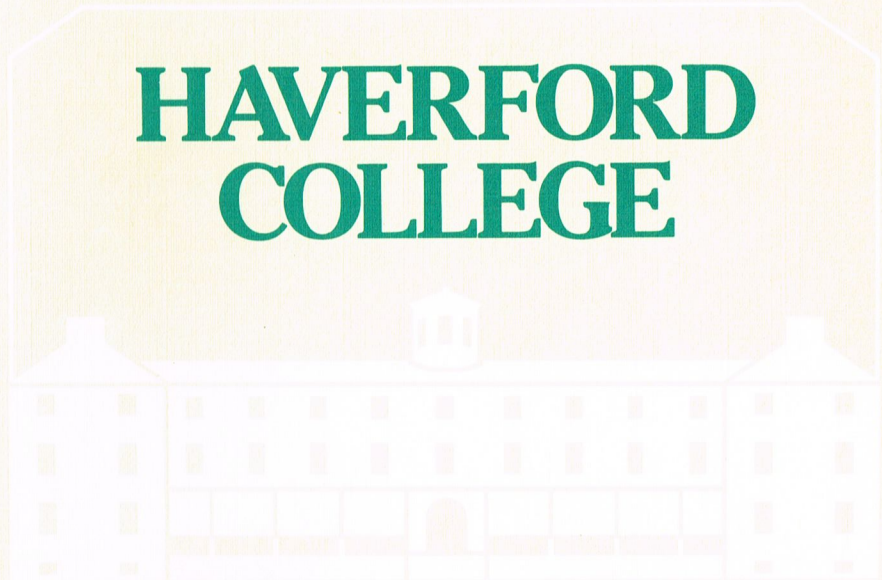


RUTH MARSHALL MAGILL PROFESSORSHIP

Inaugural Program



**HVERFORD
COLLEGE**

Saturday, April 28, 2001

Ruth Marshall Magill Professorship

Inaugural Program

Greetings and Introduction

Thomas R. Tritton, President

Remarks

Elaine Hansen, Provost

Lecture-Demonstration

"A Composer's Creative Work"

Curtis Cacioppo

THE ANCESTORS

after a painting by Charles Stegeman

- I - Berceuse
- II - Scherzo
- III - Interlude
- IV - Scherzo
- V - Barcarolle

Gloria Justen, violin
David Geber, cello
Curt Cacioppo, piano

The Ruth Marshall Magill Professorship in Music was established in 1972 by James Magill '07 in honor of his wife.

Curt Cacioppo

Curt Cacioppo was born in 1951 in Ravenna, Ohio. He began piano lessons at 9 and gave his first recital at age 11 at Kent State University's School of Music, where he received his baccalaureate degree a decade later, studying composition and majoring in piano. He participated in master classes led by Arthur Loesser, John Browning, Robert de Gaetano, and others. At the Blossom Festival School he coached chamber music under principal members of The Cleveland Orchestra, including oboist John Mack and violinist Josef Gingold, and pianist Tung Kwong Kwong. From Ohio he went to New York University and earned a Master of Arts degree (1976) in musicology under Gustave Reese. From New York, Cacioppo went on to Harvard University. Under Leon Kirchner, Earl Kim and Ivan Tcherepnin, he took his MA (1979) and PhD (1980) in composition, and was appointed to the faculty for a four-year period. In 1983 he moved from Cambridge to join the faculty of Haverford.

In 1985 Cacioppo gave a debut recital of his own and other 20th century piano music at Merkin Concert Hall in NYC. Tim Page, writing in *The New York Times*, described the program as "defiantly unusual," and in particular the composer's *Eclogue* as "a massive, coloristic and meticulously constructed work on a Lisztian scale." In years following, Cacioppo has been composer in residence at the Grand Teton Festival, received a Howard Foundation Fellowship and the internationally conferred Luise Vosgerchian Teaching Prize, and commissions for leading ensembles including the Chicago & Milwaukee Symphonies, the Ensemble di Venezia, the American String Quartet and the Emerson Quartet. His music has been performed throughout the U.S. and abroad, notably in Germany and Italy. In 1997 he was honored with an Academy Award in music by the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Cacioppo's music reflects both old world and new world aspects. His Italian affinities are seen in works like *Ciclo metamorfico*, *Sonata trasfigurata*, *Tuscan Folio*, *Poems from Paternina*, *Canto notturno*, etc. All of the works on his most recent CD -- *Nayéñzani* ("Monsterslayer," based on Navajo legend), and others such as *Scenes from Indian Country* or *Quattro canti indigeni nordamericani* -- show the Native American influence on his creativity. His music has been discussed at length in a 1996 dissertation by Dr. Paul Orgel entitled *Curt Cacioppo's Pawnee Preludes for Piano* (Temple University), and recent reviews and feature articles may be found in *Fanfare*, *20th Century Music*, the Italian review *Amadeus*, and the *American Record Guide*.

Pre-Concert Remarks, April 28, 2001
Inauguration of Curt Cacioppo as
Ruth Marshall Magill Professor of Music, Haverford College

“The Ancestors” – Origins and Correspondences

The main source of inspiration for my Trio “The Ancestors” was a painting of the same title done in 1961 by Belgian-Canadian artist Charles Stegeman, Sr. The title itself unlocks myriad associations, clusters of names familial and geographical, thoughts of ritual, incantation and Native American lore. I was 10 when it was painted, and so much of what I was feeling as an impressionable child I relived while writing the Trio, feelings blithe and vulnerable.

I grew up in Ohio, in the Cuyahoga Valley – right there you have Indian vocabulary. It’s everywhere when you start noticing it. Across from where we lived there was a little island – Goose Egg Island, it was called – in the Cuyahoga River, where a band of Seneca Iroquois led by Chief Wabmong had camped in the days of Tecumseh. And there were markers, especially a bronze plaque that had been mounted on a big boulder at the base of the valley by the river bank. On it in relief was the image of an Indian carrying his canoe overhead, making land portage from one point of the Crooked River (that’s what Cuyahoga means – crooked) to another to cut the distance. My grandmother used to take me to that spot so I could contemplate it, and I used to draw it over and over again in my sketchbook. All this is in the Trio, and more. If you listen carefully, you can hear a youngster practicing the piano, playing with his toy soldiers, being chased by monsters in his nightmares, watching the sun slowly rise over the river. There are sphinxes, too – motifs derived from autobiographically significant number and letter sequences.

On this large canvas, Charles depicts in quasi-representational form two stark, proto-human figures who seem to be cradling, sanctifying, defending and also tapping strength from a glowing, primordial light source between them. This symbolizes to me fundamental mysteries, fundamental realities about the miraculous origin, continuity, and connectedness of life. While the archeo-hominids present a fierce first impression, they at the same time exhibit a consoling nature. Structurally the painting and the Trio share the same plan. Charles has organized his work in five geometric fields, 1 & 5 (the blank canvas areas left and right) and 2 & 4 (the paleo-anthropoid forms) being symmetrically related, with 3 (the Urlicht in the middle) acting as a foil between. Likewise, my Trio proceeds through 5 connected movements. The opening Berceuse and the closing Barcarolle proportionally and emotionally correspond to areas 1 & 5 in the painting, the vehement scherzi to 2 & 4, and the magical Interlude to area 3 in the middle. In discussing our creative processes, it emerged that Charles is equally fascinated with numbers and numerology in his work. And beyond this, we share a deep love of the music of Chopin.

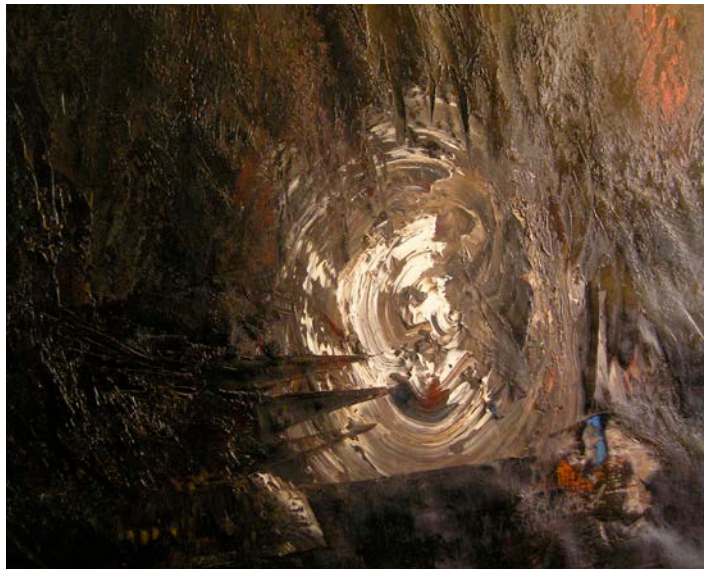
Doors to Special Tones

If you look closely at the central area of the painting, you'll see that the little portion at the bottom of the light sphere is partially obstructed to view by a rectangular shape. This suggests a flap or a lid, which the paleo-anthropoids have opened in order to retrieve from its housing the life renewing orb. If you look at the piano, you'll see a rectangular shape in the form of a music rack. When I begin the Interlude, which corresponds to that radiant, embryonic form in the painting, I must manipulate the music rack in a way similar to the closing and opening of a lid, because according to what I've written, I have to reach inside the piano and pull out the desired tones by plucking the strings manually. Actually I pluck the strings with two picks that vaguely resemble the claw-like fingers of the male ancestor. These are special tones, just as the object the ancestors are holding is special. And my choreography in obtaining them in a sense reenacts the movements that the ancestors have made in accessing their vital energy. Further, I open yet another door. This particular piano – the Bösendorfer Imperial – has 9 additional keys below the usual bottom A. To avoid disorientation for the player, these keys are covered by a hinged flap. When you wish to use any of these double sub-contra notes, you must lift up the flap to expose the additional keys. In movement III again, I do just that, and lift the flap in order to sound a double sub contra F, another special tone.

Dedication

The piece was written for the Sartory Trio at the artist's request, as a gift for his son, who was violinist of the ensemble. It is also in memory of my maternal grandmother, who died not long before I began it.

- Curt Cacioppo



"The Ancestors," detail (bottom center), Charles Stegeman, Sr. (1961)