“Celebrating Great American Music” FALL 2013

All Wednesday lectures are held from 3:00-4:00 PM in the Callaway Auditorium on the campus of LaGrange College. Open to the public and Free admission. These seminars are offered in conjunction with New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music, a Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibit, opening at The Legacy Museum on Main in downtown LaGrange on October 12, 2013.

Sept. 4 Noteworthy American Piano Music
Dr. Tracy Xian, LaGrange College Applied Piano instructor
Pianist Tracy Xian will present a lecture recital of American music. Selections include elements of hymn tune, folk song and jazz.

Sept. 11 Fighting for a Solo in America!
Ken Passmore. LaGrange College Applied Percussion Instructor
Listen to the unique sound of the marimba and learn how it gained popularity throughout America as a member of the percussion family.

Sept. 18 “Noah”
Presentation of a new work by composer, Lee Johnson LaGrange College Music Professor and Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Music

Sept. 25 Great American Choral Music of Today
Debbie Ogle, LaGrange College Music Professor and Choral Director
From colonial days until today, American composers have written compelling and stirring music for choral ensembles. This lecture explores the contributions of Eric Whitacre, Morton Lauridsen and Renee Clausen, three of America’s most accomplished living choral composers.

Oct. 2 “Hellhound on my Trail”: The Impact of the Blues
Dr. Mitchell Turner, LaGrange College Music Professor
Many successful artists have credited the blues as a major influence in their own music. This lecture examines the impact and long-term influence blues music had on later popular styles.

Oct. 9 Little Women, an American opera by Mark Adamo
Dr. Toni Anderson, LaGrange College Music Professor
In 1998, composer Mark Adamo took on the challenge of translating Louisa May Alcott’s much-beloved story of four sisters growing up in civil-war era New England into an opera. The work was an instant success. We will view highlights of the opera and examine how Adamo musically presents one of the story’s major themes: the passage of time.
Oct. 16  Flowers from Roots: The Story of the Folk Revival
Dr. Lyn Schenbeck, guest presenter

Folk tunes in America were preserved through the oral tradition and, in part, through the five-volume transcriptions of British scholar, Francis Child. Beginning in the 1950s with Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, America saw an increasing interest in folk music. Some of it was true folk music, Child ballads for example; others consisted of music written for protests against war and to support the Civil Rights movement. Pete Seeger and Joan Baez were two of the first musicians to record many of these Child ballads as well as their own original songs, helping to launch the folk revival in this country. In “Flowers from Root,” Dr. Lyn Schenbeck discusses the evolution of the folk revival in America and explores how folk music is a part of almost every one of today’s musical genres.

Oct. 23  The Story of the Spiritual
Dr. Lawrence Schenbeck and Laura English-Robinson, guest presenters

The music known today as “the Negro spiritual” represents a unique American development that took place during a period of rapid change. Between the Civil War and the Roaring Twenties, the United States went from an agrarian to an industrial society, its population increasingly concentrated in large urban centers. One of the most significant musical genres of the period was created by Africans brought to these shores many years earlier. Soprano Laura English-Robinson and musicologist Lawrence Schenbeck explore this music, performing important songs from various historical moments and commenting on twists and turns in the ongoing Story of the Spiritual.

Oct. 30  “Have a Little Talk with Jesus”: The Southern Gospel Tradition
Charles Story, Adam Traylor, Teel Yarbrough Traylor, guest artists

Smooth, tight harmonies and a lyrical focus on the message of Christian salvation characterize the musical art form known as southern gospel. Inextricably linked to the religious experience of rural Southerners, this genre claimed an important part of the music industry with the rise of radio broadcasting in the early decades of the 20th century. This lecture/demonstration explores the rich heritage of the white southern gospel tradition, its musical and performance style, and those groups who became giants in the gospel music industry.

Nov. 6  A Voice from the Wilderness: Sacred Song in Frontier Georgia
Dr. Steven Darsey, guest presenter

In the crucible of frontier Georgia, the land, the people and God fused into a hard wrought, intimate bond – a union that brought forth songs and repertories of a straight forward character and humble piety, unique in the world. Using folk hymns from the Sacred Harp tune book, camp meeting tunes, African American spirituals, and Native American song, Steven Darsey shows how these songs and repertories are growing from their frontier roots into an oracular tapestry, giving increasing voice to divine truth.