

Silver Roots

Echoing Voices: A Musical History of America

About:

Echoing Voices presents music from the homelands of immigrants through their stories and history of coming to America. The music of 10 regions – the Netherlands, England, Ireland, Germany, Russia, Italy, Puerto Rico, Egypt, China and the US – is featured alongside interactive activities for audience members of all ages. *Echoing Voices'* debut run as part of Lincoln Center's 2009/10 *Meet the Artist* series in New York City sold out so quickly that additional shows had to be booked to accommodate demand!

Repertoire Highlights:

Julius Röntgen (arr.)	<i>Passepied & Pieternelle</i> (The Netherlands - circa 1600)
Franz Danzi	<i>Trio for Flute, Violin & Cello</i> , Opus 71 (Germany - circa 1800)
Maria Millar (arr.)	<i>Slumber Song & Folk Melodies</i> (Egypt - traditional)
Li Guo Quan (arr.)	<i>Singing the Night Among Fishing Boats</i> (China - traditional)
Maria Millar (arr.)	<i>Weeping, Sad & Lonely / Devil's Dream / Chicken Reel</i> (USA - trad.)

Cross-Curriculum Topics:

American folk music, European folk music, Asian folk music, African folk music, ethnomusicology, music appreciation, American history, New York history, European history, Latin American history, Asian history, African history, immigration, women's studies

What Presenters Say:

"Your ability to showcase virtuosic performance coupled with a palpable connection to your audience results in an absolutely riveting experience. I personally have learned so much about the cultures whose music you feature and the emotion with which each piece was composed. The audience response to each of your appearances has been tremendous! I would recommend your programs to anyone looking for an interesting, informative, and lively performance! I look forward to working with you many more times in the future!"

- Hillary McAndrew, Senior Manager, Meet the Artist, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc

Links to Video:

Interactive Outreach Concert (Short Video): http://youtu.be/_0DkQcA6HVk

Interactive Outreach Concert (Long Video): <http://youtu.be/SRYK61kczE>

Optional Interactive Activities:

1. Choose-Your-Own-Adventure – audience determines the outcome of some open-ended stories, affecting the melody, key and tempo of the music.
2. Acting – individual audience members are called onto stage to enact stories and personal accounts.
3. Clapping and Dancing – audience claps or dances along with some of the music being performed. Clapping can determine tempo, dynamics and rubato to fit the mood of the story. Makeshift percussion instruments are used by audience members to accompany the performers.
4. Q & A – performers ask audience questions and take questions as well.
5. First-Hand Accounts – audience members (and performers) share their own immigrant experiences.

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Optional Discussion Points:

1. Why people emigrate (political, religious and/or racial exile, civil unrest, poverty, adventure, opportunity).
2. How communities develop.
3. Why we fear that which is different (each wave of immigrants brings new cultures, customs and languages that challenge accepted ways of thinking).
4. What we can learn from the stories of immigrants (dealing with obstacles, creating a lifeline through relationships and communities, making the most of one's skills, communicating in a new language).

Article about *Echoing Voices*:

Echoing Voices: A musical tale of America's immigrants on stage at Hofstra

March 24, 2011

By Karen Bloom for the *Long Island Herald* (Long Island, NY)

The story of American immigration unfolds on stage through the music of Silver Roots, an ensemble of three young New York City-based classically trained musicians, who have created a vibrant program that reflects the nation's cultural melting pot. Silver Roots brings its program, "Echoing Voices: A Musical History of America," to Hofstra University's Helene Fortunoff Theater, on Sunday, as part of the Joseph G. Astman International Concert Series.

As waves of immigrants the world over arrived in New York Harbor and on the shores of America with bright hopes and big dreams in a new land, they built a new vibrant identity for America. Through the immigrants' stories – and music – they contributed a unique sound and a fresh energy to their American surroundings.

That experience and cultural impact comes alive as interpreted by this innovative ensemble, composed of violinist Maria Millar, flute player Shawn Wyckoff, and cellist Michael Haas. The trio, who originally created this program for Lincoln Center's "Meet The Artist" series in 2009, brings this imaginative concert to Long Island audiences in their first performance on the Hofstra stage. The ensemble guides the audience through entertaining tales of the immigrant experience in America through a riveting soundtrack of improvised and traditional songs – ranging from European to Middle Eastern to Asian and Latin American compositions.

The three musicians fuse story, acting, and music together to create this unique look at the immigrant experience in American history, allowing all to hear those "Echoing Voices" of the nation's heritage.

"For over 10 years we've been playing different forms of world music," said Millar, a native of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, who founded Silver Roots, along with Wyckoff. "We thought it would be interesting to base a program on immigration through Ellis Island and show how the face of immigration changed, starting with the Dutch, Irish and Germans, all the way through the 20th century."

The show evolved out of the trio's musical philosophy, which is to engage audiences in all aspects of their concert programs. "We make it extremely interesting and involve our audiences," Millar said. "We are all about people understanding and enjoying music." Millar, who graduated from Juilliard in 2001, has performed throughout the world and also played the role of the fiddler in *Riverdance*.

She and Wyckoff, who graduated from Juilliard in 2002, have been playing music since their childhoods and met at the school before embarking on their musical partnership. The third member of their group, Haas, graduated from Juilliard in 2008.

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“Silver Roots lives in the continuum between classical and world music,” Millar explained. “Silver Roots performs revolutionary, customized programs that draw from a mix of classical and world music, improvisation and ground-breaking original works. Communication is the driving force, whether through masterful execution and interpretation, conversations with the audience, sharing the history behind the music or even song and dance.”

Sunday’s program includes the music of 12 regions – the Netherlands, England, Ireland, Germany, Scandinavia, Russia, Italy, Puerto Rico, Egypt, Japan, China, and the U.S. “We draw from the unknown to music people have heard,” Millar said. “We end it all with American fiddle tunes so people can hear music from here.”

Not your typical concert experience, Silver Roots programs are audience-friendly, interactive experiences. The trio’s approach encourages audience input; they often engage in dialogue with their audiences, frequently improvising their programs as they go along.

“We often have people who come up [on stage] and participate,” Millar said. “We like to connect and engage our audiences. We are less formal and structured. We want to get rid of the barrier between seats and stage and maintain an ongoing dialogue with everyone.”

Echoing Voices involves five segments, with narration by Wyckoff. The introductory portion delves into why people come to America – starting with the present-day, then transitioning back to the 1600s when New York City was first settled by the Dutch, then taken over by the English. Part 1 focuses on Europe from 1840 to 1930 when the Irish and Germans, then Italians and Russian Jews came to America in two waves. Part 2 explores Latin America from 1930 to 1965, when Puerto Ricans and Latin Americans arrived here. Part 3 focuses on Asia from 1965 through the present day, as South Asians, East Asians and Middle Easterners embarked on a new life. The concert concludes with a look at the overall impact of the immigrant experience, often including a question-and-answer session with the audience.

The entire program is experienced through the sounds of the musicians and their three instruments: violin, flute and cello. “The goal of this pared-down format is to use music and stories to create a visual, multimedia experience inside the mind,” said Millar. “We want the audience to have fun and leave feeling like they haven’t heard anything like this.”

