

***Sechseläuten* (2009) For wind ensemble**

Sechseläuten literally means “six (bell) ringing,” and I took this title from an annual festival held in Zürich. It’s a festival led by the city’s guilds, and originates in a medieval practice. In the winter, the guildsmen worked until dark, but with the longer days of summer approaching, starting with the Vernal Equinox they would work only until the 6 o’clock church bells rang—thereby signaling the end of the workday, and the beginning of socializing (in the post-winter, still available daylight). Traditionally each spring the city still celebrates this festival. There’s a children’s parade, and a parade with the Zünfte (guilds) all turned out in their fancy garb, and this all culminates in the destruction of the Böögg—the burning of winter in effigy. In modern times, the Böögg, a sort of evil snowman (and cognate of the Bogeyman), is constructed of white cotton, his head filled with fireworks. The time it takes for his head to explode into fire signals (Punxsutawney Phil-like) how much longer before winter is gone, and what sort of summer approaches.