Department of Music
College of Fine Arts

presents a

Doctoral Recital

Kim Kehau Chai II, bassoon
Albina Asryan, piano
Tallyn Wesner, clarinet
Allison McSwain, trumpet

Tiana Harjo, viola
Clinton L. Williams, conductor
Kim Weller, dancer

PROGRAM

Antonio Vivaldi
(1678-1741)

Concerto for Bassoon in D minor, RV 480
I. Allegro
II. Larghetto
III. Allegro molto

John Williams
(b. 1932)

The Five Sacred Trees
I. Eó Magna - Freely
II. Tortan - Energico
III. Eó Rossa - Slowly
IV. Craeb Uisnig - With Intensity
V. Dathi - Slowly and Reflectively

INTERMISSION

John Steinmetz
(b. 1951)

Tango for Solo Bassoon

Gabriel Fauré
(1845-1924)

Pièce
I. Adagio, molto tranquillo

David Diamond
(1915-2005)

Chamber Symphony
I. Lento sostenuto
II. Scherzo
III. Passacaglia
IV. Molto allegro

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts in Applied Music.

Kim Kehau Chai II is a student of Dr. Janis McKay.

Monday, October 31, 2011
5:30 p.m.

Dr. Arturo Rando-Grillot Recital Hall
Lee and Thomas Beam Music Center
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Program Notes

Antonio Vivaldi worked most of his life in Venice, employed by one of the four Ospedali, orphanages/schools mostly for illegitimate daughters of the Italian nobility. These Ospedali became four of the finest music conservatories in the world at that time. Vivaldi composed at least 37 works for the bassoon, more than any other instrument except the violin.

Typical of the baroque style, this work uses light and quick articulations and ornaments expected of players from that period in the first and third movements. The second movement is lyrical, exploiting the singing qualities of the bassoon.

John Williams was commissioned to compose a concerto for principal bassoonist Judith LeClair to perform with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, for the orchestra’s 150th anniversary in 1995. It has since become a staple of the bassoon literature. This version is arranged for with piano accompaniment. John Williams provided the following information.

I. Eó Mugna, the great oak, whose roots extend to Connla’s Well in the “otherworld,” stands guard over what is the source of the River Shannon and the font of all wisdom. The well is probably the source of all music, too. The inspiration for this movement is the Irish Uilleann pipe, a distant ancestor of the bassoon, whose music evokes the spirit of Mugna and the sacred well.

II. Tortan is a tree that has been associated with witches and as a result, the fiddle appears, sawing away, as it is conjoined with the music of the bassoon. The Irish Bodhran drum assists.

III. The Tree of Ross (or Eó Rossa) is a yew, and although the yew is often referred to as a symbol of death and destruction, the Tree of Ross is the subject of much rhapsodizing in the literature. It is referred to as “a mother’s good,” “Diadem of angels” and “fiaggot of the sages.” Hence, the lyrical character of this movement, wherein the bassoon incants and is accompanied by the harp!

IV. Craeb Uisnig is an ash and has been described by Robert Graves as a source of strife. Thus, a ghostly battle, where all that is heard as the phantoms struggle, is the snapping of twigs on the forest floor.

V. Dathi, which purportedly exercised authority over the Poets, and was the last tree to fall, is the subject for the close of the piece. The bassoon soliloquizes as it ponders the secrets of the Trees.

John Steinmetz is principal bassoon of the Los Angeles Opera. Active as a composer, Steinmetz completed his Tango for Solo Bassoon in 1976. Of this work, he says: 

“This tango is a comedy. I wrote it to perform with Piper Pickrell, a tall, beautiful dancer with a fabulous comic flair, who somehow managed to portray both partners dancing a tango. Meanwhile I was seated in the middle of the stage with my back to the audience, my bassoon struggling to imitate an entire dance band. She danced all around me, veering between machismo and femininity, by turns fierce and flirtatious. She stalked and dipped and turned abruptly, lampooning tango’s dramatic movements as well as its moods and rhythms.”

Gabriel Fauré was a French composer, organist, and teacher. He lived and composed during the romantic era and into the 20th century when atonal music was gaining ground. Pièce is a short, intimate, salon-style work, reminiscent of his chansons, or French art songs.

David Diamond’s Chamber Symphony is almost entirely unknown. Premiered in 1937, Diamond was unhappy with the recording, and he assumed the work was bad. Bassoonist Bruce Gbur found a reference to the piece, contacted the composer, and eventually performed it at Kansas State University. Diamond was thrilled with that recording. Gbur was eventually able to print the music. Gbur notes that it shows influences of Stravinsky, with whom Diamond shared a friendship.