



College of Fine Arts ~ Department of Music

Presents

Clare Birmingham

flute

Master's Recital

with

Gina Bombola, harp
John Pollock, viola
Philip Fortenberry, piano
Ryan Simm, marimba

Wednesday, October 7, 2009

7:30pm

Doc Rando Recital Hall
Beam Music Center

Program

Sonate pour Flûte, Alto et Harpe

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

- I. Pastorale
- II. Interlude
- III. Final

Gina Bombola, harp
John Pollock, viola

Introduction and Variations, D. 802

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Philip Fortenberry, piano

Intermission

Toward the Sea for Alto Flute and Marimba

Tōru Takemitsu
(1930-1996)

- I. The Night
- II. Moby Dick
- III. Cape Cod

Ryan Simm, marimba

Chant de Linos pour Flûte et Piano

André Jolivet
(1905-1974)

Philip Fortenberry, piano

Clare Birmingham is a student of Jennifer Grim. This Performance is offered in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the Master of Music in Flute Performance.

In the summer of 1915, Claude Debussy composed the Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp, the first piece for this grouping of instruments. His original intent with the sonata was to use a trio of flute, oboe, and harp, but he made the change thinking the viola would be a better blend for the timbre of the flute. Since that time several composers have followed Debussy's example. One technique he utilizes throughout this sonata is a type of *klangfarbenmelodie*, where phrases and sections of phrases are joined by bringing in one instrument while another is sustaining a note. This technique makes use of a wide variety of tone colors, a trademark element of composition in Debussy's music. About the sonata, Debussy remarked that it was "frightfully melancholy and I don't know whether one should laugh or cry about it. Perhaps both?"

Schubert's virtuoso set of variations on "Trockne Blumen" is an important piece in flute repertoire. It is also unique in several ways: not only is it Schubert's only work for a wind instrument with piano, but of his sixteen sets of variations, it is the only independent set to be based entirely on his own lied. The song is taken from Schubert's song cycle *Die Schöne Müllerin* ("The Lovely Miller-Maid"), with poetry written by German Romantic poet Wilhelm Müller. The set of poems share a similar plot with Goethe's first novel, *Werther*, which may have been what attracted Schubert, an avid fan of Goethe, to setting the poetry to music. This set of variations is also significant because Schubert wrote the piece during several months in 1823, the same year that he contracted the disease that would ultimately take his life. Several historians have since written that it was blasphemous and careless for Schubert to consent to turning a song of such sadness and passionate longing into a virtuosic display that ends with a triumphant march. On the contrary, it is possible that Schubert purposefully used this song and brilliant set of variations to paint death in a cathartic and liberating light, especially while the composer was coming to terms with his own mortality. A quote from Schubert's writings at this time reads, "What I produce is due to my understanding of music and to my sorrows." This song portrays the Romantic theme of unrequited love as the miller from the poems imagines that after his death, the maid will at last return his love by visiting his grave. The translated text from the song is printed below:

"Trockne Blumen" ("Withered Flowers")

Ye little flow'rs, which to me she gave,
 Shall soon be laid within my grave;
 Why droop ye thus, hanging each sad head,
 As if ye knew all my hopes were fled?
 Ye blossoms all so sad and white,
 Why now so humid, once so bright?
 Ah, tears will ne'er make ye green again,
 Nor make dead love bloom like the summer rain;
 And spring will come, and the winter will go,
 And flow'rs will bloom in the vale below;
 And flow'rs will lie in my silent grave,
 The flow'rs which once to me she gave.
 And when she roams to the hillside near,
 And thinks her true love is lying here,
 The flow'rs again will more freshly bloom,
 Then winter goes and sweet May now is come.

Tōru Takemitsu was first exposed to Western music in 1944, after being conscripted into the Japanese military for the war. The music left a deep impression on the young man, and despite his lack of formal music training, he decided to become a composer at the age of 16. He later received some intermittent instruction but was largely self-taught. One of his biggest influences was Debussy, which is evident in his use of modal melodies, tone color, and different timbres. The piece *Toward the Sea* demonstrates a recurring theme in Takemitsu's music, the image of water. He used this imagery in a series of three compositions all based on *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce. The first of these three compositions utilized a cipher: the pitches Eb—E—A are used to spell out "sea" (where Eb = S in German). This cipher appears again in *Toward the Sea*, occasionally transposed to other keys, but with the same

pitch relationships. The set of three duos was originally written in 1981 for alto flute and guitar. Takemitsu later rearranged the piece for alto flute and harp, but since that time it has also been performed with alto flute and marimba. There are several indications in the score for the alto flute to use a "hollow tone," which is imitative of the Japanese bamboo vertical flute, the *shakuhachi*. Other extended techniques used by the flute in this piece are flutter tonguing and timbre trills, which are used to imitate the sound of flowing water.

The inspiration for André Jolivet's *Chant de Linos* is in Greek literature. Several versions of the story of Linos exist, but most of these tales share a common element: the image of the gods mourning the tragic death of the great musician in a cry that became known as the Linos Song. Jolivet leaves his instructions at the top of the musical score, which translates to "the Linos Song was, in Greek antiquity, a funeral song with a series of changing elements: a funeral lament, a lament broken by cries and dances." This piece has been important to flutists ever since it was commissioned of Jolivet as an examination performance piece for the prestigious and competitive Paris Conservatory in 1944. Similar to the prior pieces that have been selected as the end of year exam, or *Solos de Concours*, *Chant de Linos* is designed to test the performer's skills in articulation, finger technique, breathing, phrasing, interpretation, and overall musicality.

Clare Birmingham is in the final semester of her Master of Music degree in flute performance at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where she studies flute with Dr. Jennifer Grim. Last spring, she was the featured soloist with the UNLV Symphony, when she played the Reinecke *Concerto for Flute in D Major* as a winner of the music department's Concerto Competition. She performs regularly with the UNLV Symphony Orchestra, and also performs occasionally as an extra/substitute with the Henderson Symphony Orchestra in Henderson, Nevada. While working on her degree, she teaches flute lessons at the New York Music Academy in Las Vegas. She has visited several schools in the valley to coach flute sections, including Palo Verde High School, Thurman White Middle School, and most recently, Canyon Springs High School. She completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in Music at UNLV in May 2007, graduating magna cum laude. While at the university she has had the opportunity to play under the batons of Maestro Itzhak Perlman and Dr. Peter Schickele, also known as P. D. Q. Bach, and she has enjoyed performing with such artists as Edgar Meyer, Sarah Chang, Bebe Neuwirth, and a cast of Broadway's *Jekyll & Hyde*. Over the past several years Clare has performed in master classes with Ian Clarke, Joshua Smith, Mimi Stillman, and Jill Felber; and she has had the chance to play in ensembles in different ends of the world. In 2005 she was selected to play piccolo with a small brass and percussion ensemble from UNLV that traveled to Hong Kong to perform in the Chinese New Year Festival. Later that same year she traveled to La Croix Valmer and Le Pradet, France with the UNLV Wind Orchestra to perform in a summer music festival. Her prior flute teachers include Dr. John McMurtery, Dr. Richard Soule, and Jennifer Kuk.

I would like to say a special thank you to Gina, John, Philip, and Ryan for contributing such beautiful music for this evening's performance. Thank you especially to Ryan, who made his own adaptation for marimba off of Takemitsu's score for guitar, and to Philip, who was willing to play with me when extenuating circumstances forced me to find a new pianist with very late notice. Thank you to Dr. Jennifer Grim for all of the extra lessons and encouragement, even when I wasn't convinced that this could all be pulled off in time! Thank you to my family and friends for all of your love and support, which has been so helpful to me during such a busy semester. I want to say an extra special thank you to Mom and Dad, my biggest fans, and to my wonderful husband for your never-ending patience and support. And finally, I want to thank each of you for coming tonight! Please join us afterward for a small reception in the lobby.