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Senior Recital: Meghan Pesch, oboe

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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Senior Recital

Meghan Pesch, oboe

assisted by

Tara Arness, flute
Christy Balluff, soprano
Jennifer Bernard, viola
Joanne Kong, piano

March 25, 2001, 5:00 PM
Perkinson Recital Hall
G. F. Handel was an English composer of German birth. He first went to London in 1710, seven years after he had written what is called the third oboe concerto (which was, paradoxically the first one written). It is his earliest surviving concerto, written in Hamburg at the age of 18. Up until this time, Handel had lived primarily in Germany, but had also done extensive travel to Italy, which influenced his musical style.

The concerto in G minor was a pioneering work in the genre. It would not be until 1710 that the concertos of Marcello, Albinoni and other would be written. In his early years, Handel wrote particularly for the oboe, including it in the orchestra for most of his concertos for other solo instruments. This concerto is the typical four-movement Baroque structure (slow-fast-slow-fast) with a squarely placed Sarabande as the third movement.

Both Italian and French influence can be seen in this piece, with the French-style dotted figures in the first movement. The title of the third movement, “Sarabande,” is suggestive of a French style; but the tempo marking, Largo, is an Italian one.
The Terzetto was Holst’s only chamber music composition. Soon after being written, the piece disappeared and turned up only after Holst’s death. It wasn’t published for a further ten years. Holst purportedly had to listen to the work several times before he decided if he liked it or not (in the end, he decided he did like it).

While Holst tended to be a unique and inventive composer, the polytonal technique (having multiple keys at the same time) was one which he had never used before. He had to use counterpoint to force the three lines into a relationship. The piece begins with the flute in A major, oboe in A-flat major and the viola in C major.

The first movement is in ternary form, interrupted by chorale-like sections. There are three main diatonic tunes that retain their individuality throughout the movement. And at the end, the three keys blend with complete unanimity.

The second movement is fugal in style with relaxed intermediate portions to give it flux and contrast. The violas pizzicato combines rhythms and keys with each other. In the final measures, each instrument runs arpeggios through its individual tonality’s tonic triad.
Vaughan Williams based much of his output on folksong, creating a synthesizing effect between his style and that of the folksong. Vaughan Williams had a particular love for modality, using archaic-sounding combinations which reflect a certain amount of calmness even when dissonant harmonies are applied.

In these songs, the composer’s sensitivity to spoken rhythms and inflections of verse were applied to the poems of William Blake, one of his favorite authors. The music was later used in a film biography, “The Vision of William Blake”.

The first song, “Infant Joy,” has a quiet naiveté about it. The melodic line is almost pentatonic with adaptations of rhythm and phrase in a question-and-answer style. This is followed by “A Poison Tree”, which is anguished in sound. The tune expands out of the opening phrase of the oboe. Vaughan Williams uses contrasting rhythms and dissonances in the oboe and voice to ironically undermine the text. The third song, “The Piper” is characterized by a pastoral tenderness. The fifth song, “The Lamb” is a text that Vaughan Williams detested, but nonetheless was pushed to compose the piece. In this song, the oboe is used to weave a pastoral background. Song number eight “Cruelty Has a Human Heart” is an enigmatic and haunting song with frequent use of the augmented fourth. The final song, “Eternity,” ends the work in a calm, quiet mood.
1. Infant Joy

“I have no name: I am but two days old.”
What shall I call thee?
“I happy am, Joy is my name.”
Sweet joy befall thee!
Pretty Joy!
Sweet Joy, but two days old.
Sweet Joy I call thee.
Thou dost smile, I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee!

2. A Poison Tree

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.
And I water’d it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears; and I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.
And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright;
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,
And into my garden stole
When night had veil’ d the pole:
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretch’d beneath the tree.

3. The Piper

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me:
“Pipe a song about a Lamb.”
So I piped with merry cheer.
“Piper, pipe that song again;”
So I piped: he wept to hear.
“Drop they pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy songs of happy cheer:”
So I sang the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.
“Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book, that all may read.”
So he vanish’d from my sight,
And I pluck’d a hollow reed,
And I made a rural pen,
And I stain’d the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.
5. The Lamb

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed,
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and He is mild:
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

8. Cruelty Has a Human Heart

Cruelty has a human heart,
And Jealousy a human face;
Terror the human form divine,
And Secrecy the human dress.
The human dress is forged iron,
The human form a fiery forge,
The human face a furnace seal'd
The human heart its hungry gorge.

10. Eternity

He who binds to himself a Joy
Doth the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the Joy as it flies
Lives in Eternity's sunrise.
The look of love alarms,
Because it's fill'd with fire;
But the look of soft deceit
Shall win the lover's hire.
Soft deceit and idleness,
These are Beauty's sweetest dress.
Temporal Variations

1. Theme
2. Oration
3. March
4. Exercises
5. Commination
6. Chorale
7. Waltz
8. Polka
9. Resolution

with

Joanne Kong, piano

Benjamin Britten

(1913-1976)

This work was written very quickly at the end of 1936 and was premiered three days after its completion. It was then forgotten for the rest of Britten’s lifetime and wasn’t published until four years after his death. The Temporal Variations are of a particularly agitated character and explore the capability of the performer and the timbre of the instrument.

There are a total of nine movements, eight of which are based on the opening movement, ‘Theme.’ This is a play of semitonal ascending motion in a very free style. The ‘Oration’ is an elaborate recitative; boldly declamatory and later beseeching. This is followed by the ‘March’ which evokes Prokofiev. ‘Exercises’ is based on squared pitch alterations. The ‘Commination’ (meaning a denunciation or threat of vengeance) recalls the semitonal movement from the ‘Theme.’ It consists of severely plain phrases for the oboe with rhetorical piano gestures. The ‘Chorale’ has a strict distribution between chordal phrases in the piano with single pitches in the oboe. This is then followed by two dances: the ‘Waltz’ and the ‘Polka.’ The final movement is the ‘Resolution’ in which the oboe returns to the ascending pitches of the theme, supported by successive chords in the piano.