

4-7-2007

Student Recital: Joyce Bennett, double bass, and Abbey Bourdon, violin

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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Joyce Bennett, double bass
Abbey Bourdon, violin



Assisted by
Joanne Kong, piano
Susanna Klein, violin
Andrew Schutte, double bass

April 7, 2007 • 7:30 pm
Perkinson Recital Hall

Program

Sonata V

Jean-Marie Leclair

1. Allegro ma poco
2. Gavotte, Andante grazioso
3. Presto

Plaisir d'Amour

G. B. Martini
arr. Edouard Nanny
ed. Paul Bedell

Sonata in G minor

Henry Eccles
trans. Fred Zimmermann

1. Largo
2. Allegro con spirito
3. Adagio
4. Vivace

Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano

Ludwig van Beethoven

1. Allegro con spirito
2. Adagio con molt' espressione
3. Rondo, Allegro molto

~Intermission~

Concerto, Op. 3

Serge Koussevitzky

1. Allegro

Violin Concerto No. 2

Serge Prokofiev

1. Allegro moderato

Valentine

Jacob Druckman

Seven Duets for the Double Bass

David Anderson

1. "Kibbles & Kiblitz"
2. "Parade of the Policially Prudent Pigs"
4. "Lament"
6. "Rush Hour"

Program Notes

Sonata V

Jean-Marie Leclair
(1697-1764)

Jean-Marie Leclair is considered to be the first great figure of the French violin school. He was born in Lyons in 1697, and spent the early part of his life as a dancer with the Lyons opera. His talent for the violin was soon discovered, and by 1728 he had achieved great success as a concert violinist in Paris. Although lauded as a performer in his day, it is through his compositions that he made his most lasting impact. In addition to raising violin performance to new levels of virtuosity, he was able to modify the style of Corelli to suit the French audience. As Arthur Cohn writes, "Leclair's music is a skillful blend of Italian songfulness and French elegance and grace . . ." ¹

Leclair's life ended in tragedy. Following a split with his wife in 1758, he moved into a small house in a dangerous section of Paris. Six years later he was murdered as he entered his house, most likely by his nephew (also a violinist). However, his nephew was never brought to trial, allowing others to speculate that his gardener or his wife may have been at fault.

Plaisir d'Amour

G. B. Martini
(1741-1816)
arr. Edouard Nanny
ed. Paul Bedell

Little is known about Giovanni Martini. What is known is that he was a German organist and composer who moved to Paris in the late 18th century. There he composed *Plaisir d'Amour*. Originally written for voice, the piece quickly became a classic French love song. Jean de Florian (1755-1794) wrote the original lyrics to the poem for his romance "Célestine." Since Martini composed the original version of the song, many people have

¹ Arthur Cohn, "Leclair, Jean Marie," in *The Literature of Chamber Music* (Chapel Hill: Hinshaw Music, 1997), 1628.

made arrangements of the piece, including Hector Berlioz and his symphonic version and, perhaps more notably, Elvis Presley and his "Can't Help Falling in Love."

Sonata in G minor

Henry Eccles
(1670-1742)

A bass violinist of an English family of musicians, Henry Eccles was appointed to the King's Private Music on October 10th, 1685, and was one of the musicians who accompanied William III to Holland in 1691. During his appointment, he provided music for a variety of plays.

He originally wrote *Sonata in G minor* for the cello, but in the passing years the piece has been adopted into the double bass repertoire. Four movements comprise the piece. The first and third movements are slow and lamenting. The second movement is dance-like, and the fourth movement bright and lively.

Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

This sonata is the third of ten written by Ludwig van Beethoven for violin and piano, most of which date from 1798 to about 1803. Although Beethoven did take violin lessons at an early age, he was above all else a master of the piano. This mastery shines through in the difficulty of the piano part, which is substantial enough to prompt some to joke that this piece is really a piano sonata with violin accompaniment. That said, scholars Lewis Lockwood and Mark Kroll point out that this genre challenged Beethoven to "blend his expanded styles of keyboard writing with a wider expressive range newly possible for stringed instruments" and allowed him to "match his legendary ability to play legato with that of the violin."⁴

⁴ Lewis Lockwood and Mark Kroll, "Introduction," in *The Beethoven Violin Sonatas: History, Criticism, Performance* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 1-2.

Beethoven's early violin sonatas are often seen as an attempt to master the Viennese classical style. This should not be held against them. According to Sieghard Brandenburg, "They represent thoroughly original works of art within the conventions of the classical style."²

Concerto, Op.3

Serge Koussevitzky
(1874-1951)

Koussevitzky was born in Vishniy Volochek, Russia, on July 26, 1874. As a young boy, he learned trumpet, but later switched to the double bass. Because Jews were not allowed to live in the city of Moscow, he was baptized at 14 in order to join the Musico-Dramatic Institute of the Moscow Philharmonic, where he began to study under bass player Rambusek. Koussevitzky eventually succeeded Rambusek as principal double bass player of the orchestra and embarked upon a long solo double bass career. His conducting debut came in 1908. In 1917, he managed to survive the revolution despite his wealth. In 1920, Koussevitzky left the USSR for Berlin and Paris as a conductor, and in 1924 he took over as conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra until his death in 1951. He became an American citizen in 1941. His two major legacies are the support of contemporary music and the Tanglewood Music Center, which he began in 1940 with Aaron Copland. Koussevitzky is known today as one of the greatest American conductors and composers of double bass solo music.

Koussevitzky wrote *Concerto for Double Bass* in 1902 when he was the principal double bass of the Moscow Philharmonic and professor of the double bass at the Philharmonic Conservatory. His career as a solo double bassist was at its highest at this time. The piece greatly enriched the double bass repertoire and has today become a double bass standard. Many consider the piece one of the best ever written for the double

² Sieghard Brandenburg, "Beethoven's Opus 12 Violin Sonatas: On the Path to His Personal Style," in *The Beethoven Violin Sonatas: History, Criticism, Performance* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 5.

bass because, unlike many other double bass concertos, it is not only idiomatically written for the double bass but it communicates passion and feeling as well. The concerto is a three-movement work; this evening's performance will include only the first movement.

Violin Concerto No. 2

Serge Prokofiev
(1891-1953)

Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto, written in 1935, was one of the last major compositions he completed before his return to the Soviet Union in 1936. At the time Prokofiev was caught between two worlds—both physically and artistically. Although he was living in Paris and received the commission for a French violinist, he was in the process of strengthening his ties with Russia and preparing for his return. Stylistically, the work blends elements of Western modernism with more traditional tonal frameworks and forms that were valued in the Soviet Union.

As a whole the work is decidedly tonal, and soaring melodic line is often featured. However, there are other passages of marked dissonance and abrupt stylistic changes. What unites the work is the recycling of thematic material of two contrasting themes. The first is dark and brooding, appearing at the start of the piece in the solo violin line. The second occurs in the concerto's first transition into a major key and represents the romantic and light-hearted counterpart to the first theme.

Valentine

Jacob Druckman
(1928-1996)

An important 20th century American composer, Jacob Druckman played piano, violin, and trumpet and was composing by the age of 15. After studying at Julliard, he went to Paris on a Fullbright Fellowship where he earned a Master's Degree at the École Normale de Musique. After returning to the United States, he taught at Julliard and Bard College and was associated with the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. After leaving his

full-time position at Julliard, he became a professor at Brooklyn College, CUNY, and later Yale. His distinctions include composer-in-residence for the New York Philharmonic Orchestra from 1982-1986, two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Brandeis Creative Arts Award, election to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and commissions from the principal orchestras of Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, Radio France and St Louis, among others.

In his writing, Druckman had three main stages: neo-classicism, abstract expressionism, and "New Romanticism." *Valentine* falls into the neo-classicism stage in which Druckman aimed to compose character studies with powerful sonic images. The piece is out of character for Druckman in that it does not use any electronic music. It requires the bassist to, in Druckman's words, "attack the instrument with bow, timpani stick, both hands alternating percussive tapping on the body of the instrument with *pizzicato* harmonics, while the voice sustains tones, sings counterpoints, and punctuates accents."³ The piece is written in non-traditional notation, and is considered to be one of the most difficult ever written for the instrument.

Seven Duets for the Double Bass

David Anderson
(c. 1952)

Having earned a music degree at the University of Cincinnati College/Conservatory of Music and having studied double bass with Frank Proto, Warren Benfield and Stuart Sankey, David Anderson began composing for the double bass in 1984. He has since then composed for other instruments and ensembles. His bass-playing career has been long and prosperous: he became principal of the Louisiana Philharmonic in 1996; he became principal of the Britt Festival Orchestra in Oregon in 1994; he has performed and recorded with the Louisville Orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and many others; he has served as the bass teacher at the University of Louisville and has served on the Board of Directors of the

³ As noted in the introduction to the piece.

International Society of Bassists (ISB) as bassist/composer. In the fall of 1997 he joined the faculty of the Louisiana State University School of Music as Professional Double Bassist in Residence. After Hurricane Katrina, he took up residence in Oregon. Since returning to New Orleans, he is once again the Principal Bassist of the Louisiana Philharmonic and the bass instructor at Loyola University.

These double bass duets are idiomatically written and full of spirit. The first, "Kibbles & Kibblitz," refers to Jewish music in several passages. Employing double-stop tri-tones, "Parade of the Politically Prudent Pigs" sounds like it is wallowing in the mud. "Lament" is emotional and at times heart-wrenching with its complex harmonies between the two basses. "Rush Hour" employs double stops and harmonies that make it sound just like the beeping and hurrying of a crowded and hectic drive home.

Thank you to:

family and friends
our teachers, Paul Bedell and Susanna Klein
Joanne Kong
eighth blackbird
the University of Richmond Music Department

Please join us for a reception following the concert in
North Court Reception Room.