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Student Recital: Bryan Harris, composer

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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RICHMOND

PERKINSON RECITAL HALL

FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 1997, 8:00 PM

Student Recital

Bryan Harris, *composer*

assisted by

Mary Beth Indelicato, flute
Linda Teisher, English horn
Heidi Walsh, piano
UR Chapel Choir
Schola Cantorum

Program

Music by Bryan Harris (b. 1975)

Estudio de Doc
Bryan Harris, *guitar*

Images in Stained Glass
Mary Beth Indelicato, *flute*
Bryan Harris, *guitar*

Meditations
Linda Teisher, *English horn*
Bryan Harris, *piano*

Sacred Pieces
Introit
Hodie Christus Natus Est
Haec Dies
Amen
UR Chapel Choir

Wayfaring Stranger
Bryan Harris, *piano*
Heidi Walsh, *piano*

Blake's Godchild
Bryan Harris, *Appalachian dulcimer*

My Pretty Rose Tree
Schola Cantorum

Where The Sidewalk Ends
Invitation
Prayer of the Selfish Child
Where the Sidewalk Ends
Schola Cantorum

Program Notes
Bryan Harris

Estudio de Doc is the second of a series of *estudios* for guitar.* It is named for and dedicated to Dr. Gene H. "Doc" Anderson. The piece was written as an assignment for Doc's music theory class (the B section is, in fact, my solution to a theoretical problem Doc posed specifically to me), and it was this piece that led me to take up composition as more than a homework assignment. Therefore, *Estudio de Doc* seemed a fitting piece with which to open my recital.

* It is only fair to note that so far this series is two pieces long.

I have to confess that I'm not entirely sure how I arrived at the title *Images In Stained Glass* for this piece. My best guess is as follows: the B section of the piece is inspired by the setting of the lines *Quoniam in te confidit* from Francis Poulenc's motet *Timor et Tremor*. This particular section of the Poulenc piece reminds me (for no apparent reason) of a stained glass window in the National Cathedral known as the "Space Window." *Images In Stained Glass* is dedicated to Mary Beth Indelicato.

Meditations was written especially for Linda Teisher, partly in consideration of her uncontainable joy at the UR Music Department's recent acquisition of a new English horn. The A section of the piece consists of a simple E minor melody in the English horn accompanied by rapid, ornamented arpeggios in the piano. A modulatory piano passage leads to the B section, a D-flat major melody accompanied by broken chords. The B section itself is in *abb'a'* form, followed by an English horn recitative that leads into the recapitulation of the A section. Listen especially for the use of the F-sharp/G-flat pitch class as a pivot tone during the modulatory sections.

The Introit and Amen which bookend this set of *Sacred Pieces* were composed as a pair: the Amen first, and the Introit a few months later as a companion piece. The text of the Introit, "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for unto Thee will I pray," comes from Psalms 5:2. In addition to sharing several important harmonic progressions, the two pieces have one crucial sonority in common: the same chord that ends the Introit begins the Amen.

This setting of the *Hodie Christus Natus Est* begins (and ends) with a Gregorian chant-inspired unison statement of the first sentence of the text. From there the voices weave into and around one another before reuniting for the final *Alleluia* and restatement of the opening melody. The text and its translation are as follows:

- *Hodie Christus natus est, hodie salvator apparuit; hodie in terra canunt angeli, laetantur archangeli; hodie exultant iusti, dicentes: gloria in excelsis Deo, alleluia.*

- On this day Christ is born; today a saviour has appeared. Today the angels sing on earth and the archangels rejoice. Today the righteous exult and say: Glory to God in the highest, alleluia.

The first setting I ever heard of the *Haec Dies* was by William Byrd, and I have been captivated ever since by both the text and by the musical possibilities it presents. My own setting probably owes more to Bernstein than to Byrd–the metric shifts at the beginning are more than a little influenced by *West Side Story*–but I thank Byrd nonetheless. The text and translation are as follows:

- *Haec dies quam fecit Dominum. Exultemus et laetemur in ea. Alleluia.*

- This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Alleluia.

Wayfaring Stranger is based on the Virginia folk hymn of the same name. Although I have taken some liberties with the melody (including changing the meter from 3/2 to 4/4), I have tried to remain as true as possible to the original hymn by taking poetic ideas from the hymn text:

I'm just a poor wayfaring stranger
A-wandering through this world of woe
But there's no sorrow, nor toil nor danger
In that bright land to which I go
I'm going there to see my father
I'm going there no more to roam
I'm only going over Jordan
I'm only going over home.

I know dark clouds will gather 'round me
I know my way is rough and steep
But beauteous fields lie just beyond me
Where souls redeemed their vigil keep
I'm going there to see my mother
She'd said she'd meet me when I come
I'm only going over Jordan
I'm only going over home

I want to wear a crown of glory
When I get home to that bright land
I want to shout salvation's story
In concert with that bloodwashed band

I'm going there to meet my Saviour
To sing his praise forever more
I'm only going over Jordan
I'm only going over home

This piece was originally composed for the UR Wind Ensemble–I have adapted it for two pianos expressly for this performance.

Blake's Godchild is named for and dedicated to Blake Rainie, for the simple reason that she asked to be the piece's godmother. I felt this was not an unreasonable request, as the piece grew out of several lengthy improvisations I performed for Blake one afternoon. *Blake's Godchild* both embraces and abandons many traditions of Appalachian dulcimer performance. The use of tapped harmonics, for example, is rare on the dulcimer; the tuning of the double-course melody strings in parallel thirds is something I have never heard used before (but there is, as they say, nothing new under the sun). On the other hand, the characteristic drone sound of the dulcimer is easily identifiable in this piece, and the improvisatory "birth" of *Blake's Godchild* is very much in keeping with folk tradition.

William Blake's "My Pretty Rose Tree" is the first poem I ever set to music. Upon reading the poem for the first time, the opening line almost audibly sang itself to me, and from that melody flowed the rest of the piece. *My Pretty Rose Tree* is through-composed, the only hint of any recapitulation being the restatement of the line, "I said 'I've a Pretty Rose-tree,'" after each verse.

A flower was offered to me,
Such a flower as May never bore;
But I said "I've a Pretty Rose-tree,"
And I passed the sweet flower o'er.

Then I went to my Pretty Rose-tree
To tend her by day and by night;
But my Rose turn'd away with jealousy,
And her thorns were my only delight.

I have been working for some time on *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, a set of choral pieces based on the poems of Shel Silverstein. The set is far from complete, but these three pieces (the first and last of the cycle, as well as one from the middle) are representative of the entire work. "Invitation" is just what the title suggests–an invitation into the world that Silverstein creates with his poetry. One facet of that world is depicted in "Prayer of the Selfish Child," set as an old-fashioned Protestant hymn...with a slightly devilish twist. "Where The Sidewalk Ends" closes the set with the same introspective mood set in "Invitation."

Invitation

If you are a dreamer, come in
If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar
A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer...
If you're a pretender, come sit by my fire
For we have some flax-golden tales to spin
Come in!
Come in!

Prayer of the Selfish Child

Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
And if I die before I wake

I pray the Lord my toys to break
So none of the other kids can use 'em...
Amen.

Where The Sidewalk Ends

There is a place where the sidewalk ends
And before the street begins
And there the grass grows soft and white
And there the sun burns crimson bright
And there the moon-bird rests from his flight
To cool in the peppermint wind

Let us leave this place where the smoke blows black
And the dark street winds and bends
Past the pits where the asphalt flowers grow
We shall walk with a walk that is measured and slow
And go where the chalk-white arrows go
To the place where the sidewalk ends

Yes we'll walk with a walk that is measured and slow
And we'll go where the chalk-white arrows go
For the children, they mark, and the children, they know
The place where the sidewalk ends.

UR Chapel Choir

Ladies

Jodie P. Eicher
Karen Multhaup
Rebecca Musser
Katherine Norris
Emily Sproul
Carissa Vanagas
Heidi M. Walsh
Jackie S. Weichert

Gentlemen

Jeffrey J. Caldwell
Mark Graves
Bryan Harris

Schola Cantorum

Soprano

Tanya Burnell
Kelley Kazor
Blake Rainie
Jennifer L. Sebastian
Elva A. Van Devender

Alto

Sarah Graham
Andrea L. Johnson
Jennifer Koach*
Katherine Norris
Emily Sproul*
Elizabeth Thompson
Gretchen Wiese

Tenor

Anthony Aloise
Jeffrey J. Caldwell
David Eades*
B. Warren Gustafson
Jeremy M. King
Vincent R. Olivieri, Jr.

Bass

Devin G. Evert
Kevin G. Koziol
Hall T. McGee IV
W. Bryan Myers
Shawn D. Ruger

* denotes guest singer